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ABSTRACT

An evolving vocabulary has introduced new words and new meanings for old words into the vocabulary of Alberta's Catholic Schools. The following thirty words and phrases considered to be prime examples are discussed: blueprints, Catholic school, Christian, Christian morality, Christian values, church teachings, difference, ecumenism, faith commitment, faith community, family, hope, majority-minority, ministry of teaching, mission statement, morals, parents, parish, pluralism, practicing Catholic, reconciliation, religion, religious education, sacrament preparation, saints, secular, social justice, tolerance, values, and Vatican II. In each word some historical references, current practice, ecumenical dimensions and future uses are found. Catholic educators are encouraged to use the new words appropriately in conversation. The new words are meant to be a communication tool within the Alberta Catholic community, to serve the process of community building, and to serve as a wider ecumenical vehicle with other public, particulary Christians. References and suggested further readings are included. The book also contains a Catholic education mission statement. (AG)

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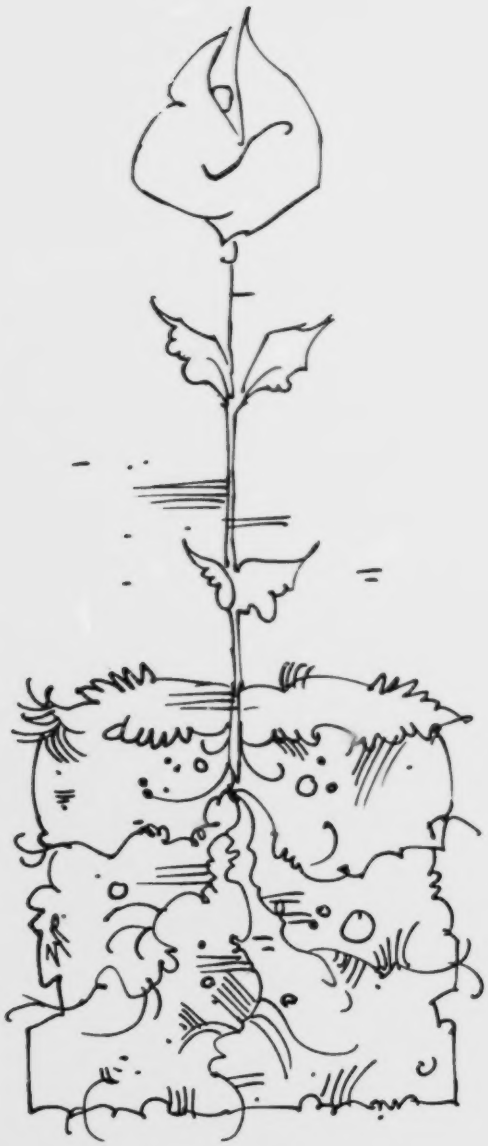
A Catholic School Lexicon

Richard L. Laplante



Roots.

Do You Mean What We Mean?

A Catholic School Lexicon

of words which describe
Christian education
in Alberta's Catholic schools

Richard L. Laplante

This Lexicon is a part of the Project-Dissertation submitted to St. Stephen's College, Edmonton, in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry degree.

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To my wife Margie,
my son Riall,
who know the words of the heart.

When the Baal Shem had a difficult task before him, he would go to a certain place in the woods, light a fire and meditate in prayer—and what he had set out to perform was done. When a generation later the "Maggid" of Meseritz was faced with the same task he would go to the same place in the woods and say: We can no longer light the fire, but we can still speak the prayers—and what he wanted done became reality. Again a generation later Rabbi Moshe Leib of Sassov had to perform this task. And he too went into the woods and said: We can no longer light a fire, nor do we know the secret meditations belonging to the prayer, but we do know the place in the woods to which it all belongs—and that must be sufficient; and sufficient it was. But when another generation had passed and Rabbi Israel of Rishin was called upon to perform the task, he sat down on his golden chair in his castle and said: We cannot light the fire, we cannot speak the prayers, we do not know the place, but we can tell the story of how it was done. And . . . the story which he told had the same effect as the actions of the other three.

Hasidic tale

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I urge the reader to scan once more the Table of Contents with this in mind: the 30 words and phrases examined in this lexicon represent ideas which are interdependent, not discrete, in their significance. Thus they appear and reappear in various combinations and contexts throughout this book. That reflects a profound reality which is the underlying theme of this volume.

RLL

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There are several groups of people I wish to thank for having assisted me in the completion and publication of this project.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Board of Directors of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association for their support of this project and thank them for the opportunity to have this work printed.

The ACSTA has been an integral part of the whole process. Through their astute Executive Director Kevin McKinney, they have supported this project from the beginning in 1983. It was their foresight which saw how beneficial a work of this kind would be in the development of a statement of Catholic school identity. They had the insight to know that if all parties concerned were not "speaking the same language" then communication would suffer. They could also see the correlation between this project and another: the Blueprints Reader. The two can be considered companion publications, as one defines the vision for Alberta's Catholic schools while the other defines the words used to describe the vision. Through their Long Range Planning Committee, they were involved in the very choice of words to be developed and in validating the content through an extensive feedback process.

The entire province has been represented through the trustee members: Kevin Murphy, Calgary; Valerie Neigum, Medicine Hat; Frank O'Hara, Edmonton; Cec Short, Fort McMurray; Honour Sauvé, Lethbridge; William Green, Edmonton; Saundra Dechant, Manning; William White, Edmonton Diocesan Priest, and Veronica Swan, Medicine Hat, who served as the perceptive leader of the committee. Her support has been unfailing and creative. Thank you all for the long hours and the thoughtful comments.

I must thank, as well, the friends at Laval University in Quebec City who originally helped me to develop this idea during my study year there. In this regard, the Quebec Lexicon *C'est-à-dire* has been of great assistance and a constant reference.

My warmest thanks are also extended to Bill Close, my advisor and friend from St. Stephen's College in Edmonton. He grasped the kernel of my idea from the very beginning and has helped me to nurture this mustard seed into a blossoming plant. I am also grateful to my many friends and colleagues in Catholic education in Alberta who have reacted to and contributed to this project in a number of informal ways over the last two years. In this regard, I am particularly grateful to my colleagues from the Edmonton Catholic schools.

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Introduction

Over the years since Vatican II, the Alberta Catholic school community has been evolving. Trying to be faithful to the past, it is stretching into the future. Its practice has been challenged by new insights and a more universal Catholic school theory is emerging. This is seen clearly in our five-year grapple with the mission and ministry of the Catholic school, in the Blueprints Process. These are indeed interesting times.

This new theory and practice has found expression in the very tools of human communication, the words which we use. Old words have taken on new meanings; new words have appeared in the incredibly short period of approximately 20 years. This word-meaning experience has been "empowering"; it has given people a new sense of identity. It has affirmed them in their pilgrimage. It has promoted a unique model of Catholic education not in opposition to the public school, but rather more true to our own tradition.

From the vantage point of these new word-meanings, the Catholic school community is giving itself a formidable challenge. All public education practices and models must be integrated into this vision which is none other than to be true to Christ, the Master Teacher. "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

The words discussed in this lexicon are prime examples of the Alberta Catholic school community's evolving vocabulary. This is not an exhaustive list, but we should grow more conversant with these words because they go to the heart of things. To discount them and not to learn to use them in their new meanings could mean missing that which is most important about these schools. We Alberta Catholic educators will only be taken seriously by friends and observers of our community if we respect our own "hidden treasures" and use

our vocabulary appropriately.

This lexicon is something between a glossary and a dictionary. Readers should find enough material on each word to understand it better. Their appetites should be whetted to research the words further. In each word, readers will find some historical references, some current practice, some ecumenical dimensions and some future issues.

This lexicon is meant to be a communication tool within the Alberta Catholic community. It is meant, in fact, to serve the very process of community-building. It is also meant to serve as a wider ecumenical vehicle with other publics, particularly fellow Christians.

Richard L. Laplante
St. Albert, Alberta
June 1985

Blueprints

In the last 15 years Catholic school partners have been taking a close look at their collective schooling and religious experiences. This reflection has taken concrete form in the Alberta-wide Blueprints Conferences. Blueprints is a process featuring a combination of these catalytic annual events with local activities to more fully realize the mission and ministry of Catholic schools.

For the participants, Blueprints has become a very powerful process of community building and identity profiling by Catholic schools. In their words:

> It is a reassuring experience that brings about a sense of unity and collegiality;
>
> It is an experience of renewal through the re-examination of roles in light of Gospel values;
>
> Of major importance is the personal growth of convincing self of value of the mission;
>
> We are privileged in Alberta—refocusing on Catholicity in our schools—in the past and recently we have been leaning towards public system;
>
> Together we share and are stronger;
>
> Blueprints is a process where we become stewards of the goals and objectives that are found within the good news!

Blueprints is not a prescriptive plan like an architectural drawing. It is rather a movement to conserve what is perceived to be the best in the collective Alberta Catholic school experience. And it is a transforming process encouraging the Catholic educators to develop new strategies and to integrate new challenges for the 1980s and 1990s.

To better grasp its province-wide impact, it is important to understand Blueprints' community-building influence. It is equally important to remember that this is the first process linking all Catholic school partners in the province. Other projects have brought some

elements of the Catholic community together, but none has involved all to the same degree. Only now would Catholic school partners realize how important it is for them to work together across Alberta in order to achieve a greater richness through each other's strengths.

Part of the Blueprints Process has involved Catholic schools giving themselves a new charter in Alberta: the 1981 Mission Statement, a new creedal statement of purpose.

A number of seminal ideas have emerged in the Blueprints Process. One of these is that richness comes from diversity and diversity will only find its fullness if all work for the common good. Such is the concept of pluralism.

Related concepts are those of experience and story. It is not doctrine that binds people together, that gives them hope. It is common experiences of the spirit of Jesus as told in story.

Doctrines and creeds emerge later to define those experiences in generalized forms. But it is experiences lived in common that bind people together as they nurture the stories of the believing community and are led to celebrate these experiences in faith. The vital cycle of religious lives becomes lived experience, told and retold in story, lived and intensified in festivity, in ritual. In this way, religious lives are dynamic, people-centered entities. Faith relates far less to doctrine for its inspiration than to the presence of God in the lives of people. When this happens, a great deal of enthusiasm is unleashed as is evident in Blueprints events.

The Blueprints Process also advances a Gospel-centered model of schools versus a simple administrative one. The vision presented is that of hope. Jesus is the man of hope. His Gospel is one of hope. Each child, each person in a Catholic school should be "hope-ful" because each one is "gifted." The challenge is to help people realize their "giftedness" so that their "hopefulness" can continue growing. Ministry of one to another helps to achieve this full potential for all. In this scheme of things, faith is at the heart of the schooling enterprise and not just an adjunct.

Emanating out of this hopeful ministering vision is a strong sense of collegial participation in Blueprints. Blueprints is not a top-down process. It stresses everybody's participation and "ownership." It attempts a sense of collegial responsibility where different leaders can emerge to serve the common good. This approach includes rigorous planning to achieve concrete change and thus allow the richness of people's talents to emerge.

In Blueprints, school principals are recognized as the pivotal change agents in Catholic schools. They are overseers in the New Testament sense. In turn, they must identify and nurture talent in teachers, students and parents.

As participants return to the annual Blueprints Conferences, they bring news of an astonishing array of activities at home, supporting the primary mandate of Catholic schools: to develop wholesome students who give witness to God. "The glory of God is man fully alive" (St. Iraeneus).

Emanating from Vatican II, Blueprints poses some disquieting questions:

1. In what diverse ways can faith and culture, religion and schooling continue to influence each other?
2. Do Catholic schools seem viable institutions to post-Vatican II students and parents? Are they sufficiently challenging to their publics?
3. Does the ecumenical thrust of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church require more recognition by the Catholic school in its daily life?
4. Does the growing pluralism among Catholics necessitate more than one educational approach to these publics? Is tolerance valued?
5. What effect does the current high rate of official interchurch marriages have on parental expectations and perceptions of Catholic schools?
6. Should schools move towards a greater emphasis of

evangelization of students, teachers and parents?

7. Is there a growing divergence of views and practices with regard to who is a Catholic as defined by the School Act and as experienced by Catholics in their church life?

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Catholic School

What constitutes the heart of the Catholic school? Can it be described appropriately for Alberta in the 1980s and '90s? As a publicly funded school system, it is imperative to satisfy the requirements of the State as well as those of the people of God, of the faith community.

In its deepest meaning, the Catholic school places at the heart of its educational purpose the person of Jesus Christ. He should inspire every action in the school's life.

The Catholic school is first of all a school. It fulfills all of the functions and learnings common to all schools. Like all schools, it has to meet Alberta Education's guidelines. Like all schools, it intends to promote the student's development towards full adulthood. Yet, it pursues this development from a definite view of the human person and of life.

The Catholic school arose out of two historical needs identified by Catholics in Alberta's early period before and after entering Confederation. First, Catholics wanted to provide their children with a good sound education so that they could be literate and compete successfully in this new frontier land. Secondly, Catholics wanted the education to take place from a given perspective, that of the faith.

Until recently, Catholic schools in Alberta have displayed a rather defensive stance towards public education. In fact, schools were called "separate" or different from the "public" majority or "Protestant" schools. Over the years, though, Canadian society has grown more tolerant of "separate" schools. The Canada Act of 1982 has reaffirmed their role in the Canadian mosaic; and Ontario decided in 1984 to extend fully funded, separate schooling to the end of grade 13.

Catholic schools have had to deal with the prevailing secular thinking in public education. This thinking spawned different attitudes toward Catholic schools. One attitude was that schools should be non-sectarian; they should not promote a specific Christian denomination. The second attitude was that public education should foster a homogenous type of citizenship. Non-British groups were to be assimilated as soon as possible without their linguistic, cultural and religious roots. Another attitude was that supernatural religion was untrue to human experience and institutional religion was divisive. The fourth attitude related to this previous one: since Catholic schools were divisive, nothing beyond the strict letter of the law would be done by public officials to support them.

While the prevailing public school thinking was less than supportive to Catholic schools, the latter also had problems supporting public schools.

Until almost the time of Vatican II in 1961, much of the leadership for Catholic schooling emanated from the bishops, priests, and religious. This hierarchy tended to be very conservative in its relationship towards the rest of the world. They were also restrictive in their pronouncements regarding education. Since few of the hierarchy and other religious involved had professional backgrounds in education, they were handicapped in their necessary discussions with government public school officials. So because many Catholic school positions were intrinsically defensive, Roman Catholics only grudgingly accepted government standards and requirements.

This parochial attitude showed also in disregard for the educational interests of other minority groups. Schools were either Protestant or separate. Any other group really did not matter.

Catholic school attitudes tended to be self-serving, witness the preoccupation with religious vocations and conversion of Native people.

While these attitudes were evolving throughout the early to mid-1900s, it was only with Vatican II that Catholic schools widened their vision.

The post-Vatican II Catholic school finds its definition less by opposition to others than through a sense of internal identity. A Catholic school presents three fundamental dimensions:

1. An explicit and respectful presentation of the Catholic faith

The Catholic school offers courses in religious education as well as other religious activities integrated into the students' lives. This faith presentation helps young people discover and deepen their moral and spiritual lives, to broaden their religious culture, and to practice Jesus' message of the Gospels. The faith is neither imposed nor used as propaganda, since it can only be realized in a deep respect for students and their consciences. Faith seeks a free response.

2. Priority attention to the human relations climate

Catholic schools seek and cherish the "climate" or "atmosphere" of love and respect between members of the school community. In this tradition, the quality of education is directly related to the quality of human relations in the school community, the ministering that people do for and to each other. Hospitality is a high value. Minorities are cherished.

3. The will to educate the total person

Catholic schools seek to educate (bring forth) all of the person's capabilities: intellectual, physical, affective, social, moral, aesthetic and religious. Therefore its role is not limited to offering courses in religious education. Without trying to be omnipotent, Catholic schools attempt to integrate questions and issues which relate to moral and social education, to affective and sexual education, to the living of values. They do try to deal explicitly with questions which relate to the believer's response to God.

Catholic schools do not pretend to have a monopoly on these dimensions, but they try to give a particular emphasis to them in a dynamically interrelated manner.

Greater concern for one's fellow human beings may take the form of service in the community, struggle for social justice or ecumenical sharing with fellow Christians.

There is always a gap between the ideal of Catholic schools and their "lived experience." So it is particularly important to Catholic schools to define their goals clearly and to develop good evaluation techniques to see how well they are reaching these goals.

In their evolution from being "separate" to becoming more truly "Catholic," Catholic schools have enormous expectations to fulfill. These expectations are tested by the information explosion, high technology and scientific advances which challenge traditional moral and religious thinking. But the basic challenge remains: will the Catholic school be a Gospel-centered place of hope or simply a school with a religious adjunct?

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The teacher as a healing presence

Christian

"It was in Antioch that the disciples were called Christians for the first time" (Acts 11:26).

With such a simple phrase the evangelist Luke summarizes an enormous historical event. Earlier in the same passage dealing with Antioch, he had reported how some men "began to talk even to the Greeks, announcing the good news of the Lord Jesus"(Acts 11:20).

The good news was a message of hope: Jesus, the Nazerene, had died and risen for the sake of all humanity. His message and testimony of love and profound challenge would henceforth be with all people (cf. John 13:35; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35). While He would be with His believers, His message would have to be ministered by His disciples, the bearers of the Word through deed and preaching.

Situated within ancient Israel and the eastern Mediterranean, the early Christians were identified as an atheistic minority religious sect by the Romans and as betrayers and violators of the Mosaic law by the Jews.

One thing was crystal clear, though. Christians were followers of Jesus, of the Way, of His liberating message of justice and love. Only later did the full historical impact of this new master, messiah, prophet and leader become evident to the Jews and to the Romans.

As Christians look back today to the beginnings, their perceptions are colored by their own experiences, values and traditions of commitment to the faith. Catholics look to the common Christian source of the first Apostolic Church from a given historical perspective, as do Protestants. All of these blends of Christianity are pervaded by a shared belief in Jesus.

The word Catholic first appeared in the second century to describe a church which was to be for all humanity throughout the world.

The word Catholic should not be shrunk in its meaning to only one form of Christian belief and practice. It is important that Roman Catholics are rediscovering one of the marks of the Apostolic Church: catholicity or universality is a dimension of all true Christian churches who wish to share Christ with everyone.

Over the last 20 years, as Catholics proceeded from the defensive counter-reformation mentality of pre-Vatican II to the more ecumenical stance of post-Vatican II, they have occasionally been "not comfortable in their skins." It seemed they did not know what to call themselves any more. Perhaps this was part of the coming together of the various Catholic ethnic traditions and rites in Alberta into larger rural and urban communities. Coinciding with Vatican II, this coalescing may also have revealed a more profound understanding of a Catholic as a Christian.

In both the Catholic Church and the Catholic school, people are becoming more comfortable with the use of the word Christian in its full richness. Occasionally, the words Catholic and Christian are interchangeable and such language crossings are to be tolerated. There is also a wide acceptance of the many ways of being a Christian since Christians are always of particular kinds. Christianity is not lived in the abstract, but in historically rooted communities.

In any case, the word Christian is used very frequently in Alberta Catholic school circles, usually in an appropriate manner and certainly with less and less apology.

A more profound understanding of being Christian has parallelled the rediscovery of a number of vital elements in Catholic schools.

Christian life in Catholic schools is not a static reality. A faith relationship to Jesus is a dynamic challenge which requires constant effort and prayer. For example, Alberta Catholic school superintendents have developed a joint creed, a statement of ethics for their position. This statement is very clear on its challenge for them to

grow in their faith. A similar statement could be developed by teachers for their ministry.

Individual and communal prayer needs to be encouraged in Catholic schools to nourish the concrete relationship with Jesus within the normal school programs as well as in the total school.

To be Christian means to live in a community of like believers. Every effort needs to be made to nurture this sense of community for staff and students in prayer, in gatherings and in service.

To be a Christian means to work very hard at understanding and sharing with other Christians. Accordingly, Catholic schools need to make ecumenical attempts to relate to other Christian schools, churches and institutions.

To be a Christian means to live a profound experience of hope in eternal life promised both now and forever. Catholic schools need to be especially vigilant in offering a strong experience of hope to their students and to others who relate to the school.

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Christian Morality

Catholic schools have always been identified with a clear sense of morality, of distinct rules and customs which led to a particular perception of order and discipline. Studies have shown many Catholics and other Christians consider this sense of order and discipline to be among their highest expectations in sending their children to such schools. Does the Christian Gospel come to support or to challenge such a perception?

Faith in the Gospel and in Christian experience relates to a fundamental view of person and of relationships in the world. These relationships of person and world have much to do with moral conduct. Christian morality is that manifested by the person whose relationships are shaped by Christ's teachings.

The question needs to be asked whether Jesus in fact presents us with a morality, in the sense of a reflection seeking to inspire action. Obviously, He did. Yet it must be stated that Jesus was not really a philosopher. He did not advocate; He did not elaborate a philosophical position as the ancient masters did in the schools of Plato and Aristotle.

Jesus offered and preached first of all the Kingdom, the "good news of salvation." (Mark 1:15) Jesus spoke as a prophet in the name of His Father. At the same time, Jesus' message was often a moral reflection. His sermons, for example, were dedicated to the concrete demands of a holy and just life, whether He was referring to reconciliation, community-building, truthfulness in word, generosity, humility, true prayer, chastity, attitude towards money and towards love (Matthew 5-8).

Another question can be asked concerning Jesus' moral precepts. Do they form a homogenous grouping of principles that can be called "a Christian morality"? It would seem so, but with some provisos.

Many of Jesus' precepts, exhortations and moral musings are found in other religious traditions or advocated by other philosophers. This should not surprise anyone. After all, the Gospel came at a certain point in time in history. It inherited and built on the contemporary and past cultures. Besides, Jesus came to enrich and to recognize all that was good in the heart of man, all that is valuable, the moral yearnings of humanity. In the personal encounter with Jesus and His believers, all of life is transformed.

Jesus' morality is open, transcending human wisdom, radically demanding, hostile to hypocrisy and to all forms of legalism. It is summarized in the all-encompassing precept of love. Catholic schools share this Gospel precept with all Christians.

Christian morality has taken on various forms over the centuries. Each generation challenges Christian morality in a different way. At the same time, each generation must rediscover the evangelical inspiration. Moral formation is required for such an awareness. Without this evangelical inspiration, without the personal faith inspiration of Jesus, Christian morality can be reduced to a dry code of high expectations. This personal inspiration is also common to all Christians.

With respect to Catholic schools, it becomes very important to refer all moral precepts to their religious source. Because of this source, an over-emphasis on external discipline, cleanliness, law and order will have to be counterbalanced with a sense of the worth and dignity of the person, of hope, of a deep sense of real social justice both within and outside Catholic schools. While Catholic schools should contribute to moral uplift, they need to go far beyond the "law and order" approach.

By situating all school precepts in the Gospel, Catholic schools will not shortchange students and parents. This will lead the Catholic school to take unpopular stands which may be in conflict with the prevailing morality of the majority culture, for example on the value of the person, of human life, on relationships, and on social issues like the distribution of wealth.

This moral challenge is at the very heart of the Catholic school. In this sense, Catholic schools are never just ordinary schools.

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Christian Values

All truly human values are also Christian inasmuch as Christ took on humanity and loved all humanity, dying on the cross. Christians have to be careful not to exercise a certain religious imperialism by appropriating "all truly human values" as only theirs, however. Human values have their own autonomy.

This last statement is a good reminder that Christ did not die just for Christians but extends His love to all people of good will, to all aspects of humanity. Applying this global Christian message to Catholic schools, their mandate becomes not just a narrow religious quest. It includes intellectual development, cultural transmission, critical judgment, values education and professional preparation.

The more singular Christian values are those which by Gospel mandate have a particular position and to which the Christian faith grants special meaning. By His actions and by His message, Christ gave new meanings to certain values. Some of the key values which He proclaimed are: freedom, faith, love, hope, God's presence, prayer, attention to the weak, reconciliation-forgiveness, justice, holiness, detachment from the world, death. Christ proposed a hierarchy of values for all men by His often repeated exhortation: "Seek first the Kingdom of God."

The Catholic school's challenge is to promote by word and action these Gospel values. While identifying the human values which it prizes, the Catholic school needs to indicate further its fullest meaning in the light of the Gospel. Today more than ever, this "symbolizing" process is crucial, given the other types of secular education models in our society.

In this process, parents expect a number of key religious values to be promoted by the Catholic school.

1. Catholic schools offer their students a living witness to Jesus and

to His Father. Students realize that Christian faith makes a difference. The person of Christ should be a living reality in the school's life.

"I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 16:6).

It must be remembered that this faith experience comes to students only through tangible signs such as relationships, religious practices, service/ministry and teachings. The students' own personal experiences, crises, happy moments are natural opportunities to deepen in faith.

2. Catholic schools offer moral leadership to students in order to help them to discuss and to deepen their fundamental valuing of justice, truth, and freedom.

   No matter what skills a student learns, what knowledge is acquired, nothing is more paramount than internal moral integrity which guides people through all their lives. This sense of morality is linked to Jesus' great commandment of love and to the Sermon on the Mount.

3. Catholic schools teach their students a sense of love and of ministry.

   In a very real way, this is the ultimate test of faith, that it be translated into action towards fellow human beings in sharing, in friendship, in societal commitments.

   Christian faith in action carries an internal motivation.

   At the same time, students are not asked to have a continued and unreal heightened awareness to carry adult-like responsibilities by being overly conscious of their Christian ministry.

4. Catholic schools help their students to develop a sense of gratuitousness about life and awareness of contemplation.

   Simply put, life is more than ordinariness, busyness, productivity, earning money. Students need to learn "to leave things behind," to breathe, to pray in moments of intensity. In this way,

they will learn to transcend the ordinary, to pray to the Saviour of all, to be in His resplendent presence and to celebrate with others.

These four religious and Christian values comprise a summary of desirable and attainable religious goals for Catholic education. At the same time, given the diversity of students who are in Catholic schools, the ways and means of offering such a total program have to be creative, diverse, and ever-changing.

Although a core of Gospel values can be identified as essential to Catholic schools, others rise to prominence as society evolves and as the Catholic people change.

What these four core values point to is the necessity for Catholic educators to continually review their purposes, their roots. These values force teachers to reassess mimicking of public education. To incarnate such values means simply to be faithful. It is also noteworthy how ecumenical these key values are.

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The emerging model of Church.

Church Teachings

Are not Catholic schools an arm of the fully publicly-funded school education network in Alberta? As such, are they not responsible to the people through democratically elected trustees, albeit catholic trustees? So what do "church teachings" have to do with such schools; what do official church authorities do to carry out these teachings in the Catholic school?

In order to answer these questions, a brief review of the church-state relationships in Alberta's Catholic schools is necessary.

It is fair to note, as many local historians have pointed out in recent years, that schools were first established in the Territories by the churches. Their goal was to assure a civilizing influence in these frontier lands as well as to assure the teaching of the faith to the children. This church-initiated impulse towards schooling was maintained into the pre- and post-1905 period of Alberta's development as a province. Catholic Church officials usually were very prominent both in the establishment and maintenance of a separate school district. Often, to consolidate the church's position, the pastor was elected to the school board. By its very behavior, then, the official church taught that its presence was necessary for a Catholic school to be faithful. Church officials, usually the pastor or bishop, played such a prominent role because they were among the few educated Catholics in the area. It is noteworthy that the church's influence is still significant in the establishment of separate school districts in Alberta.

Nonetheless, with the emergence of the stronger lay voice after Vatican II and even before, the increasing involvement of lay people in Catholic school affairs was due to a growing sense of personal responsibility to be representatives of the people. A balance has evolved between a Catholic school representative acting both as an

agent of a democratic institution representing the parents, and as a moral spokesperson for the church.

Part of the evolving awareness of the role of lay people involves a greater understanding of the diversity of church teachings. Lay people are learning that in the new church, less and less passivity towards authority is required; this passivity is being replaced by a greater involvement in decision-making. As well, believers are more involved in the search for truth as revealed through human experience and through Christ, the Man of Hope.

This new partnership among the Catholic school, the parents and the church is a process of accommodation, of tolerance-building. It is not easy for the partners to move from a stance of Catholic schools as subordinate delegates in the church's "religious teaching authority" to one of partnership.

This new partnership requires a broader, deeper and more traditional understanding of the sources of church teachings, of shared ministry:

- The scriptures are an important source of teaching authority because they reflect the primary experience of Jesus and of the early Christians in how to live out the Gospel. Catholics have rediscovered this source in the last few years.
- The magisterium or official teaching source remains important. This includes the teachings of the ecumenical councils like Vatican II, popes and bishops and the teachings of theologians, although Catholics often restrict this source to the Pope.
- Teaching also takes place through the liturgy, the worship and prayer life of the people of God, celebrating their life experiences. Catholics have undergone a profound change of language and participation in this area.
- Another forgotten source of church teaching is that of *sensus fidelium*, of what the community of faith is learning through its daily experiences of God within their ordinary events. God speaks directly through people's experience duly reflected upon. This experience has great validity and teaches much to other believers.

What Vatican II reiterated about these four sources of church teachings, of truth, is worth noting:

1. All four sources exist in a creative tension with one another.
2. All are responsible to one another.
3. No one source contains all the truth, since the fullness is only for the end of time.

As a result, no one party, group, viewpoint can claim pre-eminence in the church. Catholic Church teachings are by definition and by practice pluralistic, diverse in scope and by source.

Neither the school nor the church nor the parents possess the whole truth. All must work to effect the best possible religious schooling for our time.

Implications for Catholic schools:

1. Parish-school cooperation is a necessity, not a luxury.
2. Sacrament preparation involves a new cooperative form of school-home-parish ministry.
3. Trustees should not make decisions without church participation.
4. Each institution should challenge the other to be ever more true to its mandate.
5. Selection of personnel by Catholic school districts should respect the faith community's understanding of the practicing Catholic.
6. The interchurch experience of so many couples needs to receive more attention and respect, as the children bring new, valid ecumenical experiences to schools.
7. All Catholic school personnel and trustees need to work to discover and serve the "truth experience" in the lives of the people (cf: Acts 15:36).

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Difference

Catholic schools have always believed in their uniqueness. Indeed, they felt it so deeply they separated from the common school in Ontario and in the Territories before 1905. "Different" and "separate" were actually seen to be synonymous. Somewhat reluctantly, Catholic school partners would also admit that the public school was "different"—from theirs. Usually though, "difference" is seen as a minority characteristic.

Catholic schools have tended to emphasize their difference more than their uniqueness. This was understandable in migrant, minority, ethnic cultural groups new to North America.

The current Catholic school renewal in Alberta has taken a new direction, however. Difference is based on an articulated and integrated sense of uniqueness, and not simply as opposition. Catholic schools are trying to fulfill a unique role within the context of publicly funded schooling in Alberta. They are becoming less "separate" and more a legitimate choice.

The word difference can refer to a trait (i.e., *a* difference) or to an ensemble of traits (i.e., *the* difference) which distinguishes one thing from another, one being from another. This distinguishing of traits should be observable. Thus, difference becomes evident between two persons: physical, intellectual, cultural, moral, religious.

Difference is a very popular word today, as manifested in the expressions "respect for difference" and "right to difference."

In those cases, the word difference expresses less a fundamental dimension of reality, and more a requirement of respect and tolerance. It involves the idea of giving attention to the other's identity. Alberta Education's Tolerance and Understanding Committee relied on this usage. Ukrainian Catholics, for example, see themselves as a

different cultural and religious group. The opposite of difference is resemblance, the loss of identity, assimilation.

The "right to be different" advocated by many minorities is a strong affirmation against the pressure to uniformity in our contemporary world. These advocacy groups have legitimate claims inasmuch as they are opposed to all forms of totalitarianism: economic, cultural, political and religious. This is acceptable as long as it does not become completely self-interested, denying all forms of interdependence, leading to the denial of others. It plays a vital and absolutely necessary role in a democracy. Unfortunately, the right to be different is sometimes brandished as an absolute rejection of dialogue; narcissistic persons can become indifferent to everything and everyone else.

Difference and inequality should not be confused. It is important to struggle to eliminate or reduce inequalities in behavior and between social groups. At the same time, society must affirm and defend individuals and social groups in their significant differences. For example, unjust and unjustifiable inequalities have existed with respect to women. Everyone must work to eliminate these differences. Does this mean that sexual differences must be eliminated? Not at all. Men and women must seek, in their complementarities, keys to mutual enrichment and well-being for the entire society.

Differences can and must be lived in the hope for unity. This unity must not be a leveling one, not a reduction to the lowest common denominator. There must be a "pluralistic unity" which includes precisely the articulation of differences. In the same vein, ecumenism should never be a simple reduction but a recognition of commonalities and a sense of enrichment through legitimate differences.

It is precisely this enriching role which Catholic schools have advocated throughout their history. By being recognized as a distinct and significant minority within the Canadian confederation, Catholics believe their role not only serves their people better, but their fellow citizens as well. If Catholic schools are consistent, therefore, they

will do everything in their power to enrich Alberta's society but also to challenge it where it should be challenged. Catholic schools are in the process of educating. To educate, from the Latin *educare*, means to "bring forth." Something new is not "brought forth" by simple mimicking or conforming to the surrounding society.

One of the very important ways that Catholic schools can work for progressive change in our society is to network with other Christian institutions and groups on issues like poverty, ignorance, equality of sexes, peace and justice. Hope in the future becomes a common motivator.

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Ecumenism

One of the striking new characteristics of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church is its increasingly positive approach, tolerance and understanding towards other Christians. For a number of important reasons the Catholic Church no longer upholds the old maxim: "Outside the church, no salvation." In fact, there is ample evidence to suggest that this was never an absolute maxim. This new attitude does not seek to reduce the importance of the Catholic Church in God's plan for salvation in Jesus Christ, but merely to recognize God's work and presence in others as well, especially in other Christian churches. Also, there is an ever increasing effort being made to find experiences, values, and beliefs in common rather than points of separation and division.

The new positive attitude is encapsulated in the word ecumenism, meaning literally the "whole inhabited world" of the "whole wide world." Ecumenism is both an attitude and a movement which seeks to achieve the unity of Christians within the church and ultimately in all humankind: the so-called secular ecumenism.

As a movement, ecumenism is not exclusive to any Christian church, since by definition it means a greater unity of thought, word, prayer and of action than now exists among all Christians. Ecumenism is basically a phenomenon of this century. The major Protestant efforts towards ecumenism found their origins in a meeting at Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1910. In 1949 the World Council of Churches was formed and it has advanced the movement. The formal Roman Catholic endorsement of the ecumenical movement took place in 1964 at Vatican II when the *Decree on Ecumenism* was passed. This document outlined attitudes that Catholics should promote towards the ecumenical movement. It also indicated how Catholics might look for ecumenical unity. Central to this new Catholic understanding was that Jesus willed this unity before He died (John

17:20-23). Understood in this light, ecumenism is central to Catholic belief and practice and not an optional feature to be discarded at will.

Ecumenism incorporates all those activities which promote unity among Christians. This movement is led by the Spirit and is thus greater than any one of the particular initiatives within it.

As an attitude, ecumenism should incorporate the following:

1. A high mutual respect for religious freedom;
2. A conscientious awareness of the diversity of Christian churches and communities: their existence, their varied ways of expressing Christian faith in life, the way they give concrete witness to this faith and life, and the theological reflection that is going on within them;
3. A knowledge and admission that all Christians are responsible for church disunity and consequently needed reconciliation within Christianity;
4. A frank admission that the church is always in need of reform;
5. A renewed awareness that the church is the community preparing for ever greater manifestations of God's unifying love.

As part of the body of the Catholic Church, the Catholic school also has to examine its approach to other Christians. Catholic schools can no more exclude ecumenism than they can exclude Jesus who wills "that they may be one" (John 17:21). Nor can the Catholic school simply resort to justifying its existence based on the antipathy of the 1840s when it experienced its birth in English Canada. There is a new social situation today which requires a restructured social compact between Catholics and all other religious groups in society, especially with other Christians.

Specific ways in which Catholic schools need to relate in a positive manner to other Christians have to be developed:

1. Catholic schools need to relate far more to other Christian bodies, Christian private schools and neighboring church congregations, because they too are a means of salvation. This is particularly true of Eastern Church traditions.

2. Catholics need to formalize contacts and exchanges with other Christian representatives. One promising area of joint participation is that of social justice and peace building. Catholics must do this without minimizing differences or compromising their integrity.
3. Since so many Catholics have married other Christians, Catholic schools need to deal far more effectively with such children attending their schools and their parents. This also applies to Catholic teachers in interchurch marriages.
4. Catholic students need to study formally other Christian traditions so as to better appreciate the greater Christian world.
5. Catholic religious education programs need to continue to emphasize the common roots of Christianity: the scriptures and the person of Jesus Christ.
6. A Catholic religious education program must recognize a hierarchy of truths of major Christian themes basic to mainline Christian churches.
7. A Catholic student should be presented with the Catholic Church's pluralistic tradition: while there is one Gospel, there are four varying accounts given by the Evangelists.
8. Because of this diversity, Catholic schools must rely on many different Christian authors to represent the richness of Christ's legacy.
9. Catholic students must continue to receive a basic justice and service orientation to the world. This orientation crosses religious and creedal lines.
10. The very language used should be ecumenical, with specific Catholic usage complemented by common Christian terms.
11. The total religious education program should foster a conviction that all of life and all people are sacred and permeated by God's living presence.

While the Catholic school ecumenical agenda will remain prominent in the years ahead, one particular issue may override everything else: how can Catholics pursue their own identity, their own distinctive heritage, while engaging more forcefully in active dialogue and

activities with other Christians?

It may appear that ecumenism and confessionalism are at odds with each other. One would hope that all Christians can work for Christendom as a whole, leaving aside only that which is at variance with the Gospel. Thus an ecumenism of mutual enrichment would be practiced, rather than an ecumenism of reduction. The former type of ecumenism may help Catholics and Protestants not to fall back on acquired distinctions and legal structures of schooling, but to look at new ways of living together in this pluralistic society.

A further issue which has raised its head in Alberta schooling over the last few years is related directly to ecumenism. Tolerance and understanding of all cultures, creeds and religions has become a very important issue. It is obvious that Catholic schools should promote a high degree of tolerance and understanding towards all those within and outside their ranks. The reason for doing so, however, should go beyond the need for a multicultural respect of differences to a desire to follow Christ's loving, saving action for all humans.

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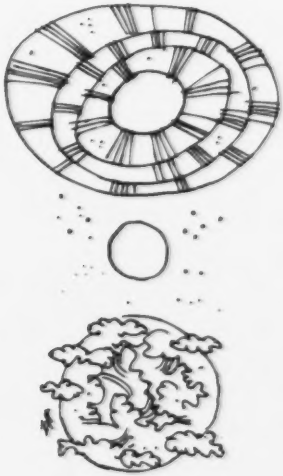

Faith Commitment

More and more over the last few years, the expression faith commitment has been used in Alberta Catholic school circles. It is a redundant statement since faith by definition implies commitment to someone or to something.

Nonetheless, the Catholic school community is expressing a profound conviction and need through this language usage. In the stereotyped pre-Vatican II Catholic Church, to believe, to have faith, meant to be faithful, to follow your faith, your church, in a formal, legalistic way. Often this external conformity was related to faith as knowledge. To know the faith was synonymous with being committed to the faith. By insisting on using the term faith commitment today, Catholics are recognizing that faith is both belief and practice, awareness and witnessing, reflection and sharing.

The following statements are heard frequently in Catholic school circles:

1. Only committed Catholics should teach in Catholic schools.
2. Religious education should produce religious commitment; otherwise, why have Catholic schools?
3. Students attending Catholic schools are presumed to have some commitment to Catholicism.
4. Religion teachers should be teaching their own faith commitments.
5. Catholic teachers should not teach anything they do not believe in personally.
6. An unmarried Catholic teacher having sexual relationships should withdraw from a Catholic school.
7. A divorced Catholic teacher who remarries before annulment comes through should be asked to resign from a Catholic school staff.

8. Catholic school principals should exhort their teachers and staff to lead more committed, moral lives.
9. Religion teachers should seek from students responses which indicate personal faith and commitment.
10. Religious education classes are concerned primarily with developing knowledge and understanding of religion and not with commitment or faith development.
11. Committed Christian teachers of any denomination have much to offer to Catholic school students.

These statements indicate a wide range of interpretation regarding faith commitment in Catholic schools. They usually lead to spirited debate and strong differences of opinion. There is need, therefore, to clarify the meaning of faith commitment within the aims and processes of a Catholic school.

Faith commitment can mean, first of all, the beliefs and values that a person holds as a Christian. Commitment also indicates that a person is attached to these beliefs and values. To believe in Jesus Christ should make a difference, should lead to definite actions and should affect a person's lifestyle. Commitment is a disposition to act according to one's beliefs and values.

Faith commitment means that we are "faithful" to certain things in our lives. It provides a needed balance to the excessive views of personalism, self-fulfillment and self-actualization. In fact, people learn much about themselves by being more and more aware of others and the beliefs to which they are faithful. The Christian Gospel offers a striking contrast to personal development goals of continued gain and increase. Through progressive purification by entering the mystery of the Cross, one becomes truly fulfilled. It is by giving that a person receives.

Faith commitment involves emotional investment. Feelings are part of believing. It also involves some rational elements. People can and should analyze their commitments. Commitment to a faith community is not incompatible with criticism of the church. A committed Christian should contribute responsible criticism to the church and

work for its continual renewal. Faith commitment is not incompatible either with some uncertainty and doubt; faith lives in hope, commitment is a voluntary process.

Certain aspects of faith commitment should show in a person's outward behavior. At the same time, faith commitment is deeply personal and cannot be measured by any normative, empirical standards. It grows from within, invited, awakened, affirmed. People share their faith commitment, and while sharing is very supportive, it cannot be imposed.

Given the highly personal nature of faith commitment and the many different influences that impinge on its growth, the Catholic school must be both realistic and humble in its faith commitment goals. Moreover, the publicly funded Catholic school in Alberta is part of the civic structure of our society. This is a limitation. The Catholic school must promote a true synthesis of faith and culture for its students. In this complementary faith commitment development role, the Catholic school should still:

1. provide some witness to commitment through its social environment;
2. be able to provide voluntary groups as appropriate structures for sharing and supporting individual commitment;
3. work closely with the parish and the family to nurture faith commitment activities.

Within this total Catholic school context, what faith commitment can be fostered by the religious education classroom?

It is important to remember that Catholic students display a wide variety of faith commitment, of belief and practices. The classroom is not a setting for genuine faith instruction. A teacher cannot and should not force students to articulate their levels of personal commitment in the classroom. This would violate their freedom; it could even compromise their consciences. Teachers must be respectful and tolerant.

What a classroom religious education program can offer is an education in commitment. Other voluntary activities of the school's life can promote personal commitment activities and sharing.

The religious education classroom should enable students to explore religious questions in a critical and inquiring way. They should be able to acquire knowledge, understanding and some effective appreciation of what commitment means. Students should become more aware of commitments in the life of Jesus, of particular Christians, of people from other Christian churches and other world religions. They should learn that commitment is not the personal prerogative of believers. They should be able to perceive how their commitments relate to their own lives. To summarize, the religious education classroom is not a place of moral exhortation to particular commitments but a place for an educational exploration of faith commitment.

Besides the faith commitment goals of the religious education classroom, the Catholic school has to give careful attention to the place of the teacher's personal commitment in all the classrooms.

Certain misunderstandings about the teaching role should be excluded right from the outset:

1. Faith commitment without knowledge is not a sufficient qualification to be a Catholic teacher. A teacher rarely communicates a commitment in a direct manner, devoid of educational content and processes.
2. The teacher's commitment is not the major content of instruction in a Catholic school. Such commitment is necessary, however, for meaningful witnessing.
3. The more committed (holier) teacher is not necessarily the best teacher, even in religion classes.

When teachers are preoccupied with communicating commitment, their classes become extraordinarily narrow, being identified with just that teacher's view of Christianity. A totalitarian climate often results, very distasteful to both students and parents.

The most appropriate type of faith commitment in a Catholic school is that of committed impartiality. This position allows teachers to use their faith commitment as an appropriate contribution to the content when this is judged to be of educational value to the lesson and to the pupils. But it is not to be the only contribution. Teachers do not always have to give their viewpoint on all issues discussed in class. In fact, at times teachers should not comment on a particular church teaching or practice if this is clearly something to which they do not adhere. Teachers do not delude the students. Teachers should also be careful not to press church teachings on youth. These teachings should be presented clearly and fairly, but never imposed.

This approach of committed impartiality sheds a favorable light on the presence of Christian teachers of other denominations in Catholic schools. For them, as for all teachers, the crucial questions become: Are they knowledgeable? Are they good teachers? Are they fair and ethical? Do they have a good appreciation of the goals of the Catholic school? Specific to these teachers, it should be seen that they can represent a valued, different point of view which could be a source of enrichment for a Catholic school.

Faith commitment is a delicate reality. It requires a faith community as a nurturing context. It requires critical reason. It requires freedom to flower. "I have come that they may have life" (John 10:10). A Catholic school must continually balance the need for individual freedom and external minimum religious conformity. This challenge will become greater in the 1980s and 1990s as pluralism continues to grow in the Catholic community.

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Faith Community

The Catholic school is not just an institution. It provides an environment and witness for the experience of Christian community living, for hope in which the student finds an opportunity for physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth.

This statement needs to be set against the traditional view of the school in western society. That view saw the school's key role as fostering rugged individualism, where the student learned the 3 R's in a highly competitive, rigorous, academic process. In that process, the weak were eliminated, so only those who could cope with the standards graduated and went on to contribute to society in further studies or by taking on an occupation. Thus students were to become enlightened and responsible citizens. Such an elitist view of education did not take much account of the socializing role of the school, nor did it reflect the idea that in a democracy universal schooling is supposed to enhance every individual.

With respect to Catholic schools, rugged individualism also had its day where "individual hope and salvation" were more important than "community hope and salvation." The individual gained salvation almost in spite of the community rather than through it. But Vatican II's stress on the "people of God," on the individual existing only within a believing community, has found its way more and more into the Catholic schooling experience in Alberta. "Community" and "faith community" are the terms most often used to denote this dimension of the Catholic school. Some find this is an uncomfortable term since it seems to make of the school a mini-church. For others, it is a welcome evolution, since religious development is seen in its total depth: individual- and community-based.

The stress on community can help Catholic schools to develop a strong sense of mission as they respond to youth's experience of an increasingly secular and alienating world. It may be even more important in a transition period like our own where stable, reinforcing cultural and social elements cannot be counted upon to support religious growth. The Christian community needs to count ever more on its own resources to encourage such growth.

Community is an "accordion" word. It takes on many meanings and colorations. Usually, however, it evokes the idea of a group within which exists a certain intensity of relationships focused on the value of each member. This greater intensity distinguishes the community from other forms of human association such as crowds or activity-based clubs, societies and associations.

In current usage, community encompasses two characteristics: first, the state of participation in certain ideals, sentiments, values, behaviors, moral and material advantages. Thus, common usage refers to a community of ideals, of interests, of goods. Community also refers to modes of societal grouping which result from this participation. Certain expressions arise out of this second meaning: family, community, school community, religious community, national community.

Christian community, or the groups of those who believe in Jesus Christ, usually have the following three characteristics:

1. Its members are bound together by their faith search;
2. Their lifestyle reflects the dynamic aspects of faith;
3. The community is not closed upon itself, but is open to the world.

The geographic extent of the Christian community varies considerably in the Catholic Church. Sometimes this expression means Catholics from throughout the world (e.g., people of God). More often this expression designates Catholics from a country, region, diocese or parish. This meaning was used frequently during the 1984 Papal visit to Canada. The expression can also apply to smaller groups: prayer groupings, home groups, the family as the first cell of society.

Christian community occurs everywhere one finds baptized believers who come together in the name of their faith, for prayer or for ministry, who are open to each other, who participate in the preoccupations and activities of the greater human and church community.

Because Christian community is a constituent of the Christian faith, it becomes an integral part of Catholic school life. The only choice is what type of community to live in and at what intensity. Religious education in both the narrow and wide sense promotes elements which form Christian community: presenting the word of God, reflecting on life experiences, ways to celebrate these faith experiences through meaningful rites.

Other signs of Christian community within the school are as diverse as each school culture or ethos can be; praying together, religious art, hospitality towards strangers should be common. Religious art should reflect and challenge the community values. The practice of hospitality towards each other and towards strangers should be real and intense. School community members should always seek God's presence in others. This means being saved by rubbing elbows with others. Such rubbing has to include attitudes and practices of reconciliation. Such community living involves the capacity to affirm the good in others and to help all members grow.

The entire Christian community thrust assumes that the school is fostering competence in human relationships as well as in academic skills. The school needs to work very deliberately at basic interpersonal skills: capacity to respect, to tolerate and appreciate others, to live with others, to communicate with others, to celebrate with others, to become total human beings who feel and think.

The faith community dimension of Catholic schooling has led to changes and has further implications:

1. Are trustees working continually at communicating with the total community they serve? This spirit of cooperation shows particularly in relationships with parents.
2. Is parish-school cooperation highly esteemed in their joint

activities? It will be very evident in the sacrament preparation and in the district's corporate planning.

3. Is parent participation in the life of the school real and respectful of the variety of parent communities? In this sense, all Catholic schools are community schools.
4. Are students encouraged according to their maturity to share responsibilities in the school? Appointment of student ombudsmen might be considered, particularly for larger schools.
5. Does evaluation of student performance stress individual potential as well as affirm growth?
6. Is student/teacher pluralism highly respected within the school?
7. Is evaluation of teacher performance primarily for the teacher's own good and secondarily for system purposes?
8. Are schools planned and built in such a way as to foster positive human interaction? Are optimal school population sizes in the forefront in such planning?
9. The school's adult faith community sets the tone for the entire school. The gathering places in the school (office, staff room, student areas) should reflect a faith community perspective. Specific staff faith development processes have to be planned.
10. The school's guidance program is crucial to fostering positive individual and faith community development, including the resolution of crises.
11. Is active ecumenical collaboration with other Christian institutions being encouraged?

The Christian faith community will always be seeking to improve and deepen itself. This search involves members who are situated at various crossroads in the faith journey. This understanding of faith community is crucial since faith is a personal response. Christian faith community results from a desire for communion; it is not mandated. Christian faith community will be authentic if it is witnessed with intelligent understanding, without pressure and without bigotry towards any of its members.

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Family

There seems to be a constant struggle today regarding the values a family can teach its children.

On the one hand, there are those who believe the individual family is everything, the cornerstone of society. If the family fails, then society fails. Often the advocates of this position tend to have a romantic notion of family, not admitting its many manifestations. They believe that the modern family is disintegrating, not simply changing. They tend therefore to close the family into itself as self-sufficient.

This view of family attempts to insulate the family from the world and its many negative influences, its secularizing tendencies. They are perhaps hankering for the simpler days of a rural society, where everything had its place, at times oppressively so, and everybody knew it. Whether our era is better or not is a moot point; it is undeniably the world and society of today. This is the challenge.

There is another position on family which is quite the opposite to the previous one. The family, while performing a good function traditionally, is now passé. New forms are needed. The state supplants the family. Social planning replaces individual decision-making. In its more extreme forms, this view of family leaves little to personal initiative. Privacy is restricted to a bare minimum. The family only matters inasmuch as it fits into the needs of the state.

The schooling part of education comprises part of this pattern. Families and children have become organized into formalized learning institutions from Grades 1-12, and usually kindergarten as well. Often this extends as well to nursery school for three- and four-year-olds. There is also day care service. Whether implicitly or explicitly, the prosperous state has taken over many traditional family functions in Canada. Perhaps this has freed the family for more important tasks. A new form of interdependency has resulted. The strict

family-to-family dependency has been replaced by a wider array of choice. The repercussions of these new choices are still unknown. In any case, a new response is required.

The church has often taken the same "knowing best for the family" posture, and still generally assumes the "telling" mode towards families. Yet there are other orientations being felt even within official statements. One fundamental orientation has to do with taking family experience seriously, whatever the family structure happens to be. This means taking the family as it is, entering its mentality, taking people as they are. Any family lives in a definable context. In Christian circles, families are incarnating the life and message of Jesus in some way. For communication to occur within a family, their individuality must be respected. People must "cross over" to them. This type of fundamental respect for the incarnation of Christ means "learning" more than "telling." It will be a long time before Christian families trust their own experiences, because they have received so little support for such an approach.

After a family has been reached by another family, or by an individual or by the church as institution, it should be more open in turn to hear other viewpoints.

The expression used quite often for this view of Christian family is a "domestic church." In other words, God acts as much in a family as He does in other forms of community in the church. Because families have the same Father, they are linked as brother and sister families. Accordingly, the new challenge emerges today of broadening family contact with and in support for each other. But this starts with taking the family seriously as it already is.

Definitions of family today reflect the profound struggle in self-perception. From the traditional nuclear family of two parents and children, there has emerged the family as a group of people usually sharing the same home, belonging to one another.

This new definition simply reflects the variety of experiences family members have today. This is well supported by facts about contemporary North American family life.

1. Families now tend to be smaller as Canadians have fewer children. Non-parenthood is fairly common.
2. Approximately every tenth family in Canada is now headed by a single parent. And it is now predicted that in the 1980s, one out of three families will experience divorce or separation.
3. Marriage rates have not declined drastically. Yet an increasing number of couples simply live together and bear children while doing so.
4. Approximately 20 percent of all Canadian marriages each year involve at least one person who has been previously married.
5. Approximately 20 percent of the population are senior citizens.
6. Over 50 percent of the labor force are women.
7. The rich families become richer and the poor families remain poor.
8. Abortions continue to rise in Canada, and a third of these involve teenagers. Sexual experimentation continues to increase among the young.
9. High unemployment causes great stress in families.
10. The extent of child and wife abuse is revealed and receives heavy media coverage.
11. Canadian families continue to be very mobile. About 25 percent move each year.
12. Interchurch marriages comprise approximately 50 percent of all official Catholic marriages in Alberta.
13. Women remain the primary participants in school affairs.

An inescapable conclusion from the foregoing is that the stable two-parent family of yesteryear, which had the time to become truly involved with school affairs, is a minority in our transient, urbanized world. They now make up only a third of parents with children. Time, more than ability and willingness, seems to be the great lack today. Competition for time is the great equalizer in modern society and among families. If schools are still communicating with parents and counting on their participation with agrarian tools, then a considerable disparity of expectation is bound to exist.

No wonder schools are struggling with the implication of these trends. Obviously, the families themselves are struggling to cope and to better understand their own experience and roles.

Various implications for Catholic schools flow from this pluralistic family experience:

1. Are schools and school systems taking families for granted? Every effort has to be made to understand the sociology of the families of these children who attend Catholic schools.
2. The teachers' family experiences need to be taken seriously.
3. The school is called upon to provide a caring, tolerant, healing attitude for increasingly hurting students.

   The Catholic school must manifest such a caring attitude because of the concern for the whole child. The counseling roles of the school, the administrator and teachers become ever more important.
4. Religious education programs must continue to recognize the crucial role of the family in the acquisition and development of faith. The interfaith experience of an increasing number of families needs to be specifically recognized by the school and incorporated into its total program.
5. Christian family life programs need to be offered in Catholic schools at all grade levels, including Christian marriage at the appropriate ages. These programs are to help students to better understand and integrate their self-image, personal relationships, sexuality, experience of family, death and suicide.

   The 1982 Alberta Education Health Program needs to be "baptized" and adapted to meet the specific moral and religious goals of Catholic schools.
6. School involvement with parents and families has to recognize the wide variety of family forms and experiences today.

   The standard Catholic school objective emphasizing the partnership of home-parish-school needs considerable effort today to develop new ways of promoting such involvement, using the new technologies available.

7. The Charter of Rights of the Family issued by the Vatican in 1984 following the 1981 synod is a good challenge for schools. It should be posted, discussed and evaluated.

The increasing recognition of family led the international synod of bishops in 1980 to consider the role of the Christian family in the modern world.

Their four-part summary statement is a very good indication of the continuing importance of families to Catholic schools.

The Synod advised families to (1) live in contradiction to the strains of modern culture; (2) be critical of injustice and disregard for spiritual values; (3) affirm that valid marriages cannot be dissolved; (4) live as a true domestic church, promoting growth in holiness through faith, hope and charity.

Their statement provides continuing challenges to Catholic schools to recognize and to support Christian families.

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The Teacher is a critical person

Hope

Never before has man felt so threatened.

Pope John Paul II
Palm Sunday, 1985

A baby is God's opinion that the world should go on.

Carl Sandburg

Hope and schooling should go hand in hand. The very acts of teaching and learning express profound hope that they will produce an educated person. Hope in the learning process means trusting in, longing for the reaching of certain goals. Therein lies the dilemma: because hope is so often taken for granted its dynamics may be as well. The very activities of a school may work against hope. The school may promote more despair than optimism, more failure than realistic success, more loss than gain of confidence. The dynamics of hope in a school's culture and life need to be closely investigated.

Students need hope today. They live in a despairing time. Many surveys reveal their lack of hope, their fear of the bomb, their disbelief in a future in the secular world. Youth's perceptions about despair tend to be reinforced by a societal disillusionment with the family. Divorce rates, family violence and breakdown are often stressed. It is no wonder that youth despair and very much need to learn to hope.

As a theological virtue along with faith and love, hope has had a rather restricted traditional meaning. The *Baltimore Cathechism* said:

> Hope is the virtue by which one firmly trusts that God, who is all-powerful and faithful to His promises, will in His mercy give us eternal happiness and the means to obtain it.

Understood in this traditional sense, hope is a rather individualistic reality. It is my hope "in my Savior," "in my eternal happiness," "in saving my soul."

As well, hope received little attention compared to its rather overpowering sibling virtues. It was almost taken for granted. Its common meaning often confirmed what Marx had said about religion being "the opium of the people," preoccupied with the afterlife.

A newer understanding of hope in Christian communities is much more realistic and demanding.

The unseen, unrealized quality of hope is perceived more clearly. St. Paul says: "but hope is not hope if its object is seen; how is it possible for one to hope for what he sees?" (Romans 8:24). From this perspective, ours is a time in need of hope.

Hope is not to be made synonymous with laissez-faire passivity, nor with naive utopianism. Christians are expected to know the basis for their hope and how they are to act as a result of this vision. St. Peter says Christians must "explain the hope that is ours" and act it (1 Peter 3:15). It is a responsibility to all creation "which groans for fulfillment until the last day" (Romans 8:22).

All of creation has been redeemed in Jesus. Jesus has proclaimed "the good news from God: the time has come to be saved and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:15).

Believers are all responsible for building the Kingdom within history. Hope for personal salvation becomes a rather minor theme compared with that of the future of the entire world. Christian existence is an existence *in* hope, an existence which seeks to *give* hope to others because Jesus rose from the dead and lives among us.

What are the signs of hope with respect to Alberta's Catholic schools?

Catholic schools are affirming more than ever their basic reason for being. There is a determined effort to establish and to recognize a positive Catholic school philosophy, identity and mission. Catholic schools are seeking identity within their own traditions as communities of faith and not in opposition to Protestants or in a mimicking

of the public school model. This new identity-building is being networked through the province-wide Blueprints Process.

Further, the school's entire life and activity are being judged against five pedagogical processes that engender hope: involvement in the moment, expectation of more, willingness to risk, a readiness to try again, good humor with creativity and growth. These will go far towards establishing Catholic schools as places of hope.

Some specific values have emerged strongly as priorities in Catholic schools: (1) respect for others, (2) creativity, (3) responsible solidarity, and (4) interiority.

On respect for others:

1. There is a wish to welcome students in their uniqueness, reacting against the school's natural tendency to pursue intellectual and social uniformity.
2. Education for talented students is becoming as much a priority as that for less able students.
3. While pursuing religious literacy for all students, Catholic schools increasingly respect and appreciate the diverse expressions of faith found among others.
4. Catholic schools are making more effort to understand our past and honor our heroes and heroines by studying the unique history of separate schools in Alberta. Social studies courses provide a legitimate vehicle for this study.

On creativity:

1. Divergent thinking and intelligence are seen as sources of inventiveness and tolerance.
2. More than helping students simply to adapt to society, schools try to prepare students to play active roles to improve and change society.

On responsible solidarity:

1. Mindless competition and rivalry are being replaced by cooperation and team work.
2. "Heart and body" are being valued as much as "thought and expression." Christian family life education is receiving more attention.
3. Technology is desired to be at the service of people and not vice versa.
4. Education for justice is being promoted within the school as well as towards the surrounding community and to the Third World.

On interiority:

1. The student's affective life is being nurtured. This means inculcation of self-confidence, learning to formulate value judgments, admire, give thanks, forgive and be reconciled. As St. Iraneus said: "The Glory of God is man fully alive."
2. Communal and individual prayer are being encouraged. Integrated in all aspects of the school's life, it helps students learn God's love through reverence and care for fellow human beings.
3. A person's being "someone" is increasingly appreciated over "having more." This is especially significant in academics where acquired knowledge needs to be ministry-oriented rather than power-oriented.

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Majority-Minority

If one set of terms has been prominent in Alberta's Catholic school history, it is certainly the term "majority-minority." Catholics have always been the minority in Alberta's pluralistic culture, and in school circles. In fact, Catholics usually labeled themselves with their minority complex as "separate" schools. This led to an entrenched inferiority mentality and sometimes to a virulently defensive attitude towards the Protestants and the public schools. At the same time Catholics, because of these preoccupations, have remained somewhat aloof towards other minority groups who might well have been seeking similar publicly funded schooling privileges.

Majority and minority have several meanings. In legal terms, they designate the status of persons who have or have not attained the age where they are considered fully capable and responsible for their actions. These terms also designate the number of votes in an assembly or for an election. As well, these terms designate a social group, a religious or linguistic group within a larger collectivity.

Thus anglophones are the majority in Canada; francophones are the majority in Quebec. Catholics are also the majority in Quebec but only a large minority in Canada.

For all practical purposes, democracy is government by the majority. Most democratic governments today are struggling to establish more effective strategies to identify and to express the majority. Periodic votes, parliaments, legislative assemblies, municipal councils and school boards are the principal means of delivering and interpreting the will of the majority while recognizing the existence of one or many minorities.

Many societal decisions, whether in social policy, common policy or school matters, even if backed with a strong majority, are opposed by an informed and well-organized minority. This establishes the classic democratic dilemma: on the one hand, the majority government always runs the risk of opposing the minority; on the other hand, to attempt to satisfy all minorities would lead eventually to a paralysis of social life, to social anarchy.

Majority rule becomes very problematic when applied to values, as the number of voters should not be therein the determining criterion. A small group of citizens can be right in opposing racial discrimination or some other specific injustice, in claiming the law on their side.

In such cases, one person or a minority has reason against all others. Accordingly, loyal opposition plays an essential role in a democratic society. However, just as there can be a tyranny by the majority, so can there be a tyranny by the minority.

Majority rule should not be identified too closely with administratively rational requirements. Nothing assures that a majority public vote on teacher education requirements in Catholic schools would be more correct than an administrative decision. A majority rule decision could be based on emotion, political lobbying or simply not be informed. On the other hand, an administration might be well informed but out of touch with political preferences.

A school system can also be governed by majority rule. However, such a school system must take extraordinary measures to respect minority voter viewpoints, since the school gives high exposure to the explanation and discovery of values. In the educational process, simple majority votes are not a sufficient strategy to assure respect and growth of persons.

Catholic schools must be particularly respectful in any activities affecting religious freedom. Other believers attending Catholic schools have to be respected in their religious beliefs as much as they need

to respect those of Catholics. As well, Catholic schools have to respect the wide divergence of belief and practice among Catholic ratepayers today.

For faith to be promoted in a Catholic school, all parishes need to be understanding of and patient with each other's beliefs. It is not sufficient for the Catholic school to affirm tolerance as a policy; it must be evident in school organization, relationship patterns and demands of students for justice. Majority patterns among Catholics must find room for minority patterns. This is especially evident when different ethnic groups with various experiences of the Catholic faith attend Catholic schools.

Schools have and can overcome the majority-minority struggles in faith questions with dialogue and prayer. In this way, the different gifts in the church can work for justice, "for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7).

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Ministry of Teaching

Ministry has emerged in Catholic school consciousness and practice since Vatican II. While ministry and minister used to be applied by Catholics only to Protestant clergymen, they now signify all manner of active Christian service existing within or outside the church, whether commissioned officially or not. This service is meant to help the faith community meet the needs of its members as well as to assist in proclaiming the good news of Jesus' saving love.

In its profane, secular root meaning, ministry comes from the Greek word *diakonia*. This word simply means service. To the extent that service has been emphasized by Vatican II, the use of ministry reflects the Council's emphasis on the whole church and on the call of its members to active participation in its life and mission.

Vatican II did not create this word; rather, as in so many other instances, it simply restored an ancient Christian understanding. Service-ministry was prominent in the early church as demonstrated by St. Paul. "It is he who gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers in roles of service for the faithful to build up the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11).

How can a teacher be perceived as a minister of Jesus' Gospel in a publicly funded Catholic school system such as exists in Alberta? Is not Alberta Education the master? Is not the Alberta Teachers' Association the teachers' master in their professional responsibilities? How can a teacher be a minister of Jesus' Gospel and still be part of an autonomous Catholic school?

These questions are valid, but a new call is being heard these days by many teachers. In the depths of their hearts they are re-hearing the story about their roots as Catholic teachers. They are hearing that Jesus' call for love and justice is to be placed at the heart of all Christians' existence. This is not a new call; it has been heard and

given witness to by thousands of teachers in Catholic schools in the past. This call and response is taking on a greater communal visibility today.

"Who is or was your favorite teacher?"

Many responses come forth, but among the most frequent are heard—one who cares, one who is knowledgeable and knows how to get it across, one who listens, one who is just, one who challenges, one who shows enthusiasm, one who helps students to "figure out what it is all about" and one who "teaches the faith."

These perceptions of teachers lead to tall expectations, but teachers are called to a tall ministry, that of teaching young people. In a nutshell, Catholic teachers are to promote the well-being of the students, their parents, the church and the rest of the human family. Teachers are called to reflect the Gospel values in the daily witnessing of their own lives. In today's world, teachers have to help students to pursue lifelong learning about themselves. A person is never fully made. Failure is part of life and has to be overcome through hope, through reconciliation, with the help of the community and God's love.

If teaching is all of these things, it is also one of the spiritual gifts identified by Paul the Apostle. Teaching is one of the many ways that God's Spirit works among His people to build up the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12).

If teaching is all of these things, it requires skills which are to be nurtured by a high degree of commitment. It is a demanding ministry, at times a very trying profession.

Teachers need support to be ministers of Jesus' Gospel. They need the support of their local parish community and of the greater Christian community. The school and the faith community have to be intertwined. Are they not all working for God's Kingdom?

It is time, perhaps, to consider formal ceremonies at the various "rites of passage" for teachers in Catholic schools. These would highlight teachers' formal entrance into and acceptance of the ministry of

teaching as well as their evolution within it. Promotions, retirements, illnesses could also be celebrated in this way by the local faith community. Is it not time, in other words, to live the fullness of our Christian story for teachers in the ministry of teaching?

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Mission Statement

Central to the current Alberta Catholic school renewal activity entitled the Blueprints Process, exists the brief Mission Statement (see Appendix).

The Mission Statement is a creedal statement, developed within the post-Vatican II Catholic school experience in Alberta. It is a statement of ideals, an illustration of the prophet Joel's comment about a people being in-spired. "And afterward I will pour my spirit upon all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophetize, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions" (Joel 2:28).

The Mission Statement is couched in language characteristic of the post-Vatican II Catholic Church. Words and phrases like hope, ministry, ecumenism, collegial decision-making, faith commitment are all common.

The Mission Statement is not Holy Writ. It was developed in 1980-81 by a theologian from Newman Theological College. It was then modified by Catholic school partners, and that process continues. It is not meant to be a proselytizing statement, though it could be used for evangelizing. But in fact the term "mission" was borrowed from management theory. It is simply an answer to the questions, "Why does this organization exist? What is its purpose?"

By definition, then, the Mission Statement is a general statement, not a program. As a collection of agreed-upon beliefs, values and practices, it should lead to definition of goals, objectives and concrete strategies, and indeed it has done that in many Alberta Catholic schools in recent years.

But, one could argue, did Catholic schools not have such corporate statements before 1981? The answer is Yes in some cases and No in others. Where Yes, the Mission Statement comes to complement, enrich, challenge and be challenged. Where No, the Mission Statement comes to fill a void. In all cases, it serves to bind Alberta Catholic school districts to a common vision. The very fact that the Mission Statement was responded to so favorably is the strongest indication of its necessity, importance and credibility.

A number of school boards have adopted the Mission Statement as their goal statement Others have adopted it with modifications. Most are using it at least as a basic reference document.

The Mission Statement may challenge certain legal strictures already in place, for instance, the provincial School Act. The School Act seems to reflect another era when antipathy existed between Catholics and other Christians. But the Mission Statement offers the core Christian values of Jesus, His redemption, the church's call and the Spirit's presence to revitalize the world (Nos. 1, 2, 3). These statements are more inclusive of other Christians than exclusive.

Following is a summary of reactions to the Mission Statement from stakeholders in Alberta Catholic schools:

- Parents and priests appreciate the model of Catholic school offered by the Mission Statement as one which is Gospel-centered (Nos. 1, 2). In other words, the Alberta version of the Catholic school is simply not a publicly funded school with a dose of religion added (No. 4). Rather, the Catholic school has to effect the synthesis of faith and culture. It has to "set forth the world of sciences and humanities in its relation to religion and Christianity" (No. 5).
- Parents and priests also appreciate the Mission Statement's recognition that the school should "complement the formation which is ideally provided in Catholic homes and parishes" (No. 4). There has been criticism of the all-inclusive view of knowledge acquisition in No. 4. Many feel that knowledge must be carefully scrutinized in light of the Gospel before it can be celebrated.

- Teachers have responded positively to the Mission Statement's valuing of the "world of science and humanities," and to the exhortation that education should "prepare the way of the Lord" and "direct secular educational formation towards an encounter with the world of the sacred" (No. 3).
- However, the distinction between "sacred" and "secular" which is found in statements 3 and 4 has been criticized. More and more practitioners and theologians prefer to perceive all of life as saved in Jesus. God is present in the very midst of the learning situation. To repeat the distinction between sacred and secular is to perpetuate an artificial dichotomy which has plagued Christianity throughout its history.
- Teachers appreciate statement No. 6 with its assertion that the school's faith commitment goals are limited. "Catholic schools cannot produce religious convictions or religious conversion, as this is a gift from God alone. But Catholic schools can and must provide a climate conducive to religious transformation, by encouraging children to express their religious convictions openly in a manner that unites thinking and feeling." While making the teacher's ministry more demanding, this holistic approach also is more rewarding since it requires dealing with the whole person.
- At the same time, teachers generally support the view that "the Catholic school nourish and promote authentic Christian living in its teachers" (No. 7). In turn, teachers become more aware that this Christian living or witnessing makes of their teaching a very demanding public ministry.
- Mission statement No. 7 has caused much controversy. The second part of No. 7 is often interpreted to mean that the "religious practice" of teachers does not matter. The statement's proponents would argue for just the opposite: religious practice matters a great deal, but individuals ought to be supported and nourished by the faith community. The spirit of compassion, of tolerance must co-exist with the spirit of justice.
- Administrators like the support and challenge issued to them by item No. 10 of the Mission Statement. Not only is the key leader-

ship role of administrators recognized, but their charge for "community-building" is well identified: they are to do this by "infusing those tasks with a unifying Christian and Catholic vision" (No. 10). Not the least of their leadership skills is required to deal with both government and church officials in a responsible yet creative manner.

- Trustees agree with the emphasis on the need for Christian professional development for teacher candidates and for teachers on staff (No. 8). They also accept the very broad range of groups to which Catholic schools are to be sensitive (No. 9). The Mission Statement certainly does not encourage a narrow, sectarian, ghettoized vision of Catholic schools.

At its best, a Catholic school attempts to live out the Mission Statement by offering students a vibrant, life-centered and just school life, where they are fully challenged in their individual abilities and their collective sense of responsibility for our society. The Mission Statement is helping Catholics to recognize the validity of their schools from within the faith experience and not simply in opposition to the public school, to Protestants or to anyone else.

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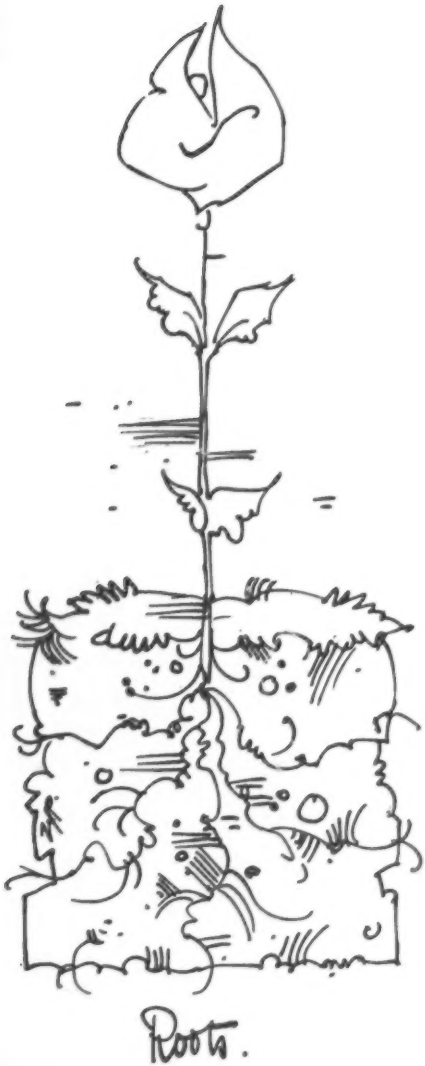

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Morals

Morals is a very significant word in the history of schools. One of their prime functions has been to teach proper morals, to pass on the right moral teachings and practices, to encourage a discerning moral outlook. In times past among Catholics, morals have been almost totally expressed in the Ten Commandments and in the precepts of the church.

This moral teaching function of schools tends to create misgivings if by morals is meant behaving in a uniform way. The moral purpose of schooling also creates considerable uneasiness when students behave in a morally creative, responsible and critical manner. In spite of these difficulties about the moral purpose of schooling, no one doubts the necessity of moral reflection, since acceptable human behavior is at stake.

According to its etymology, morals—from the Latin *moralis*— refers to customs, habits and standards of conduct in society. Morals has two dimensions: as an established fact and as a systematic reflection on human behavior (ethics).

In all societies, there exists a body of norms distinguishing proper conduct from improper conduct. This body of norms is often referred to as "morals." Expressions are heard such as primitive morals, parent morals, western world morals, Canadian morals, Christian morals, secular morals. Morals are seen as a fact, purely and simply, which the observer notes or describes.

As the expression of a fact, morals reflect a given society and situate themselves in a particular era. North American morals are not the same as African morals. Alberta's morals of the depression years are not those of the 1980s. Morals change as the group changes. Absolutists could argue the contrary, but their reference point is usually a passé, simpler, and relatively homogeneous society. Morals are fluid,

particularly in a society which is pluralistic, where homogeneity of thought is unusual and where consensus is weak.

All civilizations have processes for systematic reflection which seek rules of conduct to pursue the good, to hope in the future, to identify the right acts in the face of change. This process is often referred to as moral philosophy or ethics. Ethics is a prescription for living. It has many general subdivisions: personal morals, family morals, social morals, political morals, international morals, sexual morals, professional morals or professional code of ethics. (The latter is an important area of discussion today for teachers.) Each of these incorporates complex experiences and involves aspects of philosophy, theology, psychology and sociology.

Morals or ethics are not about what is happening but about what should be happening or should be done. Ethics is therefore a normative study which seeks to awaken the moral conscience. This study seeks particularly to analyze customs and habits, norms and values enforced in a society or group.

Morals and moralism are not synonymous. Moralism refers to multiple deviations from a true sense of morality, moral practices devoid of any rationale or religious base, simple correctives of external behavior without the spirit which gives life. Formalism, a juridical or legalistic attitude, is not morality. Jesus took the Pharisees' moralism severely to task.

It is obvious that Catholic schools share a profound moral function with all schools. They should promote a sense of justice, fairness, equality, truth, goodness. This is a genuine ecumenical call.

Catholic schools are also called increasingly to promote a unique sense of Christian morals, true to their central purpose. This sense of morals will not be apart from the regular instruction, the community and the school life. To be true, it needs to be right at the heart of things, in Christian family life and religious education, social studies, literature and science courses. Catholic schools may be tackling their greatest challenge in promoting a critical sense of discernment, of morals. At the same time, critical, divergent thinking may

contribute much to a just and loving world, and challenge the majority morals of the surrounding culture.

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Parents

Parents are key agents in Catholic schools. Too often their role is taken for granted. More and more, parents and, at times, school people are demanding more significant participation. Parents are less and less satisfied with the notion that they are the primary educators because they are the first in time. The rhetoric of parent-teacher partnership in the Catholic tradition of schooling has to become more of a reality, because children need continuing, 24-hours-a-day evidence that they are loved.

Parents express their expectations in a number of ways.

When religious education of children is discussed, whose children are affected? Are they the school's children? Of course not. They are there by government requirement and the voluntary participation of parents. Are they the government's children? Of course not. The government is a creation of the people, of the parents, of the citizens of a society. The government is there to serve the people. Are they the church's children? Of course not, although sometimes such expressions are used in a figurative sense.

The church is supposed to serve children and parents in their faith responsibilities towards God and towards their fellow human beings. It does not bear children; nor does it raise them. It celebrates new life with them.

It is time for parents to speak up for themselves. It is time for parents to say what they expect of themselves and, as a result, what they are prepared to do about these expectations.

Parenting is a very difficult responsibility and parents need all the help they can get. At the same time, however, they should receive and obtain help in such a way that they can help themselves.

Nothing is more demeaning for parents than to have people-experts telling them what to do with their children. There is a need to move from a "telling" model to a "cooperative" model, where all share different responsibilities regarding "the children."

Parents are supported in their convictions about the key role in the faith education of their children by a constant teaching in the Catholic Church tradition.

This teaching states: "Parents are the primary educators of their children." The church teaches that parents cannot be replaced, that God has granted them children to bear, to love, to respect, to hope with, to cry and laugh with and about. This is a profound ecumenical ministry common to all Christians. This is the first and basic religious education: growth in faith and love as human beings living together. Depending on these first day-to-day living lessons, all else is possible or not. In Pope John Paul II's words: "Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis."

The primary role of the family is also supported by massive evidence from research in the social sciences. Often it is cited how the family is the most powerful religious force in human life. This research challenges schools to reflect seriously on whether or not they are fully respecting this basic role of families in their programs, priorities and practices. This research challenges parents on whether or not they have simply abdicated their own responsibilities to schools and whether they are prepared to stand up for their rights. It is their children's future that is at stake.

With this in mind, what are parents' religious expectations of Catholic schools and what are they prepared to work towards?

First and foremost, they expect that their children will be treated and respected as having been created in God's image, as having God-given rights, talents and responsibilities.

Second, they expect that schools will promote a basic kind of human and academic growth in a Christian spirit of respect, freedom, tolerance and love. This will mean disciplining and challenging their children at times. This will be done because of the common values identified above and not because of the educators' determination to exert authority or any other demeaning approach. This also means forgiving, reconciling and supporting each other when people err.

Third, they expect staffs to live and celebrate the Christian message in an academic community of faith. They are not asking for perfection. They are simply asking for people who try their best and keep communicating to them and their children how they are trying.

Fourth, they expect their elected trustees to promote the common Christian beliefs and values in all programs and policies. They cannot accept anything less. They wish their children to see how faith matters in all aspects of life.

Fifth, they expect specific religious education activities, in and out of class, appropriate to the maturity of their children. Their children are perceptive enough to see whether home and school are working together or not. Some parents and educators might say that this is a tall order. It is, certainly. However, if home and school cannot agree on what they are striving for together, it is very difficult to see how they would achieve it apart. They are talking about the same people, their children.

Sixth, they expect their children to reach suitable levels of religious literacy as a result of being in Catholic schools.

Seventh, they expect to be involved as much as possible in this total religious education of their children.

If they do not wish to be involved, then they should not expect the school to do everything on its own, nor to accomplish much at all.

However, in order for this new partnership for a common mission, this new parental involvement to occur, a few basic principles have to be acted upon forcefully and quickly by all concerned.

1. Parental involvement is required in school because parents have

a unique and irreplaceable contribution to make to the children, especially their own.

2. Parental involvement has a key role to play in the faith and moral education of their children, given the importance of role models in these areas.
3. Parental involvement in schools today is based on a unique role that parents have as first and permanent educators of their children. This uniqueness means that parents need to make more choices for their children and progressively involve them. Parents need to coordinate more the various agents who affect their children's education.
4. Parental involvement in school activities is consistent with an effort to democratize teaching. This may be the most important reason why parents want to have a greater role in school. They are moving from being simple consumers to a greater participatory role.
5. Parental involvement does not mean teachers must abdicate. Parents simply want to be considered as equals with others in the education of their children.
6. Parental involvement is most effective when it is generated by parents.
7. In order to be genuine, parental involvement must from the outset accompany all attempts to change institutions.
8. Parental involvement cannot be assured without considering their competencies. Different from the professional meaning of competency, the basic competency of being a parent has to be respected and enhanced. Parental involvement varies with the type of school, grade levels and age of students.
9. Parental involvement needs to vary in response to local needs.
10. Parental involvement needs to respect the various lifestyles, interests and home situation of parents (e.g., single parents, time available, unemployment, men/women).
11. Parental involvement requires the skills of listening, compromising and community-building if the diverse interests in a school are to work towards common goals.

12. Parental involvement requires a good flow of accessible, intelligible and consistent information from the school to the home.
13. Parental involvement takes nothing away from others interested in education.

It appears obvious that greater parental participation, while very desirable, will not happen by chance. Catholic parents and teachers will need to work very deliberately to achieve this new partnership. It is worth noting that the Alberta-wide Blueprints Process for Catholic schools has identified this goal as a priority.

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Parish

The traditional Catholic school-parish relationship in Alberta was characterized by certainty. The new relationship is often described as uncertain, halting, filled with all sorts of questions.

In the traditional, somewhat stereotyped scenario, the parish was really in charge of the school sacrament preparation and celebration programs, the religious education programs and all the religious life of the school. Religiously, the school was totally dependent on the parish. The parish priest and the sisters played a dominant role since they were the religious experts, the purveyors of the required religious knowledge. Often priests, brothers and sisters also had official authority in the school.

There were certain cracks in this solid edifice, since the Catholic school was by law an independent body with its own legally constituted and duly elected body of trustees. Thus, there were always laypeople in the role of trustees. Their effectiveness in fighting for autonomous Catholic schools, even in religious matters, resided in the strength of their personalities and their capacity to deal with the religious professionals. This is not to imply the parish was not performing an important service to schools. It simply describes the hierarchical, top-down model of religion, faith, and church prevailing.

The post-Vatican II parish-school relationship is characterized by much tentativeness because the old model has yet to yield fully to a new form. Besides the pastor, there is often a parish worker and there is usually a parish council with which to work. In many cases, the traditional parish expectations are still in place whereby the school relies on the parish for its spiritual life. The responsibility lies, of course, with both the school and the parish. In more and more cases it lies also with a renewed sense of personal and corporate ministry; a deeper sense of a layperson's call to faith, hope and

baptism; and with the need to build up strong, autonomous communities and schools. A more egalitarian relationship is evolving between parish and school.

It is very uneven, both in terms of consistency from one situation to another and with respect to actual practices and roles. Nonetheless, there seems to be a common acknowledgment that just as a school is a place for those who "meet there," the parish responds to a need for sacred space and time. In its root meaning, *paroikos* means "dwelling near." The parish is meant to be the local community of Catholics who participate in common worship and service. But quite often, the real faith community for students and parents is not the geographical parish. It may be a movement within Catholicism. It may be a cluster of families. It may be a youth group. It may not exist at all. As a result, the school community has a great deal of difficulty relating to all the faith communities of staff, parents and students.

Often, by default, the school becomes a primary faith community. This places very difficult demands on it, since it is not established either by purpose or by structure to be a primary faith community. A school is not a church. If it plays this role, it can only do so in a temporary, second-best fashion.

The parish-school relationship will be influenced more and more by the growing ecumenical and pluralistic experiences of Catholics. Parents who live in such a world, both socially and culturally, will at least expect the schools to help students deal with these new relationships. Even in a traditional type of Catholic school, parents still expect their children to live in this world as it is and to cope with it.

The future parish-school relationship may be foreshadowed by the new approach to preparation for the sacraments. This involves a simpler instructional role for the school and a strong role in the celebrations for parish and family. This requires dialogue, preparation and a strong cooperative style among equals.

Parish and school roles will take on a new light as they take more seriously the new manifestations of family. The relationship between

parish and school will continue to evolve as they respond better to the diverse, media-ridden and secular lifestyles of families.

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Pluralism

If uniformity was a by-word of the pre-Vatican II Catholic Church, then certainly pluralism typifies the post-Vatican II experience. As a word and an experience, pluralism evokes strong reactions, since it probes to the core of a Catholic's religious convictions. At the same time, the meanings ascribed to pluralism vary. This is evinced by current discussions of "appropriate" and "inappropriate" pluralism in the context of "tolerance and understanding."

At a first level of meaning, pluralism simply recognizes the diversity which exists in society, in the Catholic Church and in the Catholic school. Thus in Alberta there are diverse religions, diverse cultures and different types of schools. Mission Statement (see Appendix) No. 9 of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association acknowledges this kind of diversity.

The word pluralism also relates to a philosophical or theoretical meaning. In this sense, pluralism usually points to a doctrine, a system of thought which justifies and values diversity. This doctrine will sometimes challenge the too rigid structure of a group or of a totalitarian thought. For example, in a society with a unitary school system, school pluralism will seek to break the monopoly of a single vision of the world of education by justifying the emergence of alternative schools. Historically in English Canada, publicly funded Catholic separate schools served as alternatives to the majority unit, the public schools. More recently in Alberta, private schools and alternative schools within the public school system similarly perceive themselves as challenging the monolithic public education view of schooling. Once a diversity of schools is established, pluralism also seeks to establish or maintain legitimate differences in school offerings.

Pluralism can have very negative results when it protects existing inequalities, and the interests of the strongest and the most active group, under the cover of unconditional respect for individual freedom.

Pluralism also takes on a simpler meaning, flowing from the preceding one. It can designate an attitude, a way of reacting to the phenomenon of diversity which characterizes contemporary society: pluralism leads one to perceive an opportunity for enrichment, a sign and guarantee of freedom, a call to genuine tolerance. A pluralist school would be characterized by such an attitude. But a school can only be pluralist if its principal partners are in agreement on educational and religious goals. If this is not the case, then a pluralist school would be impossible, since its partners do not accept diversity. In this latter case, the school would feature a tense cohabitation of views rather than genuine pluralism.

Applied to Catholic schools, the truly pluralist attitude is hospitable to diversity, affirming distinct identities and respecting differences. Such an attitude involves both opportunity and risks. It offers the opportunity for dialogue, to experience complementarity, to affirm publicly one's convictions. On the other hand, it runs the risk of encountering divisions into relativism or fear of affirming oneself; or into dogmatism in which one seeks to impose "pluralist" views on others.

In the final analysis, is there a basis for suggesting that Catholic schools are pluralist in their very core? If so, what does this pluralism mean?

In its best tradition, Christianity has subscribed to the key double-faced axiom: unity in diversity and diversity in unity. Rooted in scripture, this tradition was articulated by Paul the Apostle. "There are different gifts but the same Spirit: there are differrent ministries but the same work; there are different works but the same God who accomplishes them in everyone. To each person the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

But what is the heart of Christianity and, by extension, of the Catholic School? In the words of the Apostle Peter, it was, it is Jesus, the Christ. In the words of the Alberta Catholic Schools Trustees' Mission Statement, "Jesus Christ came to reveal the true identity of humanity as a people saved from its sin of rejecting God—a people who discover its full identity only by responding to God's voice" (No. 1).

Right from the beginning, however, people experienced Christ in different ways. Four Gospel accounts were needed to give the full richness of Christ's message. At the same time, the hearers of the disciples "heard these men speaking his own language" (Acts 2:6). It is apparent that the church was pluriform right from its inception. This same experience prevails today: we call Catholics pre-Vatican II, Orthodox, evangelical, liberational, individual, liturgical, communal, patriotic and silent.

How do you maintain unity in diversity and diversity in unity? Whether one speaks of the church of Corinth or Jerusalem in the New Testament times or of the church of South or North America in our times, Christ binds people together. This sense of the universality of truth binds us all, through liturgical, doctrinal, and ethnic diversity today.

With respect to pluralism in Catholic schools, some fundamental questions need to be asked across all programs and all activities. Is the central message of Jesus being preached directly and indirectly? Is the dynamic presence of His Spirit leading teachers, parents and trustees to see ever more divergent and rich ways to express His message of love, hope and justice?

On the other hand, does this diversity express in all its forms the central faith in Jesus Christ as found in the Gospels and formulated in central dogmas of tradition? Does this diversity in all its multiple manifestations have as basic principles those of the Gospel such as love for all and respect for life? Does this diversity express a continuity in the living tradition of the church's life from New Testament times to our own? Does this variety express a genuine attempt to

apply the Gospel message to contemporary issues?

The years ahead will be very demanding for Catholic schools. They will have to deal with the changing needs of ever more diverse students, teachers, and parents (Mission Statement No. 9). It will be wise for all Catholic school partners to remember that religious "transformation" takes time where "thinking and feeling" are to be united (Mission Statement No. 6).

While our perceptions of other Christians are colored by our own particular viewpoints, Christian pluralism requires viewing other Christian experiences as inclusively as possible. Christ is for all.

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Practicing Catholic

In the Alberta Catholic school setting, qualifiers are sometimes needed for the word Catholic, depending on whether it is used in the legal or theological sense. In a strictly legal sense, Catholics are by definition members of the Church of Rome. A theological definition of the term Catholic would have to include elements of belief, behavior, values and morals. In other words, it does not suffice to claim to be a Catholic. More important, what evidence does one present to the faith community to substantiate the claim?

As the cultural aspects of "doing the Catholic things" are stripped away in a world dominated by material and limited goals, it becomes more important to readily identify what it means to be a Catholic. At the same time, with the renewal following Vatican II, parents have become more demanding of teachers' learning, teaching and witnessing in Catholic schools. A real danger results: by definition, faith is a journey, hope is a goal; and a Catholic school should not expect teachers and students to come "ready made."

The term "practicing Catholic" needs analysis. Practicing refers to actions, and its antonym is "theory." Practice is the concrete realization of theory, projects, principles, intentions.

For Catholics, "practicing" tends to be reduced to "going to mass on Sunday," to participation in the weekly Eucharist.

Christian practice cannot be reduced to such a minimalist goal. To be a practicing Catholic means first of all the living out of Christ's commandment of love, as well as His other prescriptions and recommendations as found, for example, in the Sermon on the Mount. The Acts of the Apostles describe well the practicing Christian: "They devoted themselves to the Apostles' instructions and the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers. . . . Those who believed shared all things in common . . . dividing everything on the

basis of each one's need" (Acts 2:42-45).

Practicing Catholics who limit expression of their faith to the Sunday Eucharist are in as much trouble as those for whom it is insignificant.

This is why it is difficult to eliminate the ambiguity from the expression practicing Catholic. For some, the term simply means going to church on Sunday; for others, it means a total Christian practice. In the first case, the empirical evidence is easy to obtain but means little in itself; in the second case, full Christian practice is difficult to measure since it involves things known only to the believer and to God.

Accordingly, the words "believer" and "practicing" go together. Christian life needs to be infused with the Word of God. At the same time, the Word of God needs to find expression in the practicing Catholic's life.

Vatican II called for a deep, more balanced and comprehensive notion of faith and religion in human life. From this perspective, the term practicing Catholic includes:

1. *Dimension of belief:*
   One would expect evidence of belief in a basic creed such as the Nicene formula, for example.
2. *Dimension of practice:*
   The faithful would observe certain devotions, liturgical acts and sacramental practice.
3. *Dimension of knowledge:*
   The believer sustains faith through regular study of the history, theology and practices of the church.
4. *Dimension of experience:*
   The practicing Catholic experiences personal encounter with God in the Spirit of Jesus—seldom in the sense of Paul on the road to Damascus, but often with a sense of revelation in encounters with other people.

5. *Dimension of moral behavior:*

   Through their personal deportment, practicing Catholics display their awareness that faith has consequences.

Clearly, in Catholic schools the wider definition of practicing Catholic has to be used. The minimal definition is unacceptable.

It is also evident that the notion of practicing Catholic cannot be measured in any simplistic way. Moreover, any person in authority should be very careful to respect the transcendental dimension of the faith as being beyond their judgment, responsibility and control.

Further, while the personal aspect of being a practicing Catholic is crucial, the faith community dimension is no less so. Besides appealing directly to God (in the classic line of Martin Luther, "Here I stand"), the individual must accept the community's role as a validating body evaluating the quality of one's practice. At the same time, the community is also a source of support and love.

The term practicing Catholic implies a non-selective approach to the Catholic agenda. One can priorize one's beliefs and practices, but one cannot become exclusive. Two examples of this are the contemporary imperative to teach social justice and ecumenism in schools. Both of these are essential dimensions of being a Catholic today.

For everyone involved in Catholic schools, studying and celebrating the faith are key elements in being true practicing Catholics. These are dynamic realities which are never done once and for all.

The future of Catholic schools will be very promising if a rich, multi-dimensional definition of practicing Catholic is promoted. More is expected; more should result. At the same time, all partners in Catholic schooling will have to remember that everyone is at a different place on the faith journey because of personal, family and other circumstances. Tremendous tolerance, flexibility and support should be shared, so that all can reach the fullness of their calling in their own way.

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Reconciliation

> It was God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation . . . so we are ambassadors for Christ.
> (2 Corinthians 5:19-20)

Reconciliation refers to a very old reality in Christian experience: the building of community by fostering a particular, pervasive school atmosphere. Reconciliation is anything but the confirmation of the status quo. Reconciliation challenges us to go beyond academics to a total human involvement in the process of learning.

Reconciliation is an honored word in church circles and in worship activities. It reaches beyond the old "penance," the confession of sins. Both in school and in worship, Christ admonishes believers to make redress in their relationships before presenting themselves to God (Matthew 5:23).

The reality denoted by reconciliation is an ancient one inasmuch as forgiveness has always been part of the Christian church experience. Flowing from Jesus' prayer, "forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive each one who is in debt to us" (Luke 11:3-4), reconciliation relates to the communal dimension of Catholic school life. It could be said that the quality and refinement of reconciliation activities in a Catholic school will be a strong indicator of how effective it is. The point could be extended: true learning in a Catholic school is enhanced by the reconciling attitudes, rituals and relationships of its members towards each other and towards the secular culture.

Reconciliation can relate to many meanings: the restoration of friendship and harmony, the overcoming of opposition or division. As a Christian value, reconciliation flows from the realization that Jesus reconciled believers to the Father even when they were sinners in order that they might bring harmony, hope, peace and healing to their community (Romans 5:8).

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Reconciliation is an outgrowth of humility. Christians are utterly dependent on God. Because of this reconciling love, school personnel can reach out to students. In turn, students can reach out to each other.

Reconciliation touches many community-building activities. It challenges pride, conceit, belittling, competition and presumptuous superiority (Philippians 2:3-6). The role of servant (Luke 22:27) and humility of heart (Matthew 11:29) are more harmonious with it.

As a foundation of Christian community living, reconciliation points to the need for unity (ecumenism) and peace among Christians particularly. Catholics need to work at reconciling with other Christians and their institutions, particularly with those Christians attending Catholic schools.

Reconciliation in the school would be evinced by a spirit of sharing and trust among students and teachers, cooperation among teachers and students, and working for justice in the school and in society. Catholic school staffs should also be able to work through the conflicts that arise in school life where so many people interact so variously in such close quarters.

Reconciliation and humility would be missing when administrators are too rigid, teachers too arbitrary, too much competition exists among students, self-hatred and prejudice are prominent, self-centered and fragmented lives are seen, and destructive criticism occurs too frequently.

A reconciling attitude and approach has to become a fundamental dimension of administrators' skills and education. It has to become and remain an essential teacher attitude. This will have to be developed; it is not automatic. In a world where fragmentation is part of our lives, Catholic schools have to promote, by their very rituals, reconciliation and healing.

Is hospitality a special care in our Catholic schools (Romans 5:12)? Do people feel welcome there? Is there someone in charge of hospitality?

Is the new wave of evaluation sweeping through schools producing reconciliation or anxiety? for students? for teachers? for administrators? for parents?

Is the staff room a place for reconciliation?

Is discipline simply living with consequences, or is forgiveness part of the process?

Do graduation rituals include moments of reconciliation?

Is great care given to helping students be reconciled with their family circumstances? The school counselor and the Christian Family Life Program have key roles here.

Are there opportunities in the school to celebrate forgiveness, to be able to forgive each other?

Are specific efforts made for reconciliation among various linguistic and ethnic groups?

A school is a tremendous anthill. For a school culture to be a truly loving, hospitable environment, reconciliation has to be present. Reconciling events have to be planned and integrated into school life. People have to know why they should reconcile and how.

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Religion

Religion is obviously a very common word in Alberta Catholic schools. Students "go to religion classes" or "follow a religious education course," or "go to religion activities." Lately, students and teachers are known to have "got religion" or are getting "into religion." Religion is listed as one of the "courses" or school activities in calenders, material resource lists, staff assignments, principal's role and parent activities. Overtly, the word is quite visible in schools. It has big press. It is not excluded from an integral educational process as it might be in a public school. Catholics simply consider religion to be part of what it means to be educated. It spells out their uniqueness.

In order to understand better this catch-all word, it will be necessary to distinguish three main aspects of its meaning: (1) Religion as a dimension of life, (2) Religion as an area of study, (3) Religion as a dimension of the whole school.

In the film version of the *Diary of Anne Frank*, Anne asks her friend why he does not have a religion. By religion, she goes on to say, she does not mean belief in heaven, hell or purgatory necessarily, but a belief in some ideal or type of everlasting life.

Anne Frank's approach is one among many. For others, religion can mean belonging to some type of "churchy" organization. It is a way of belonging in our society. For others still, religion means being dedicated to a worthwhile cause, for example the United Way, the cause of science, the cause of education, the United Nations, the Indians and the Inuit in the north, the promotion of more advanced methods for improving agriculture in underdeveloped countries, the emancipation of women. These causes make individuals feel they are accomplishing something.

In the final analysis, Anne Frank's approach still seems to be the truest. Religion and the religious sentiment have to be involved not only with a person's preoccupations, but with the after-life, with God in some way. To be religious means a "feeling of absolute surrender" to something, to someone beyond human experience. It means also that human beings, overwhelmed by their littleness in the world, are aware of a mysterious reality, "tremendous and fascinating," on which they are dependent, a reality "wholly other" than themselves. The holy, holy, holy of the Eucharist expresses the heart of the religious experience. Others see religious experience as a feeling of security and as a sense of longing, of hope for something greater than human experience, as indeed people today sense how little really stands the test of lasting security, of fulfilling humanity's longings.

There are many other ways of typifying the religious experience or religion. It remains that religion can stand for an ideal in life, one which goes much beyond the limited spheres of human activity. Religion goes beyond human activity, not excluding it, but by deepening it and using it as a link to the divine. In this approach, then, religion does not take one away from the urgent tasks of our world, but intensifies and motivates our activities. Religion gives a lasting direction to people's lives.

This experiential description of religion tends to stress the personal aspects of this fundamental dimension of life. This is somewhat different from the institutional aspect of religion stressed in the Catholic schools prior to Vatican II.

At the same time, it is one which is profoundly ecumenical, since it approaches religious phenomena from the viewpoint of the believer/practitioner. And these experiences are often identical across Christian groups.

Just as religion must "transcend the informative" to be alive in its truest sense, it must be reflected upon to understand what its many historical, contemporary and structural ramifications might be.

Accordingly, Catholic schools have always "studied religion." In fact, this study is often given as one of its unique features, its rationale for existence.

Traditionally, the study of religion in Catholic schools was restricted to Catholicism, its sacraments, moral practices and beliefs. Only in the last 15 years or so has this study broadened to include the total Christian spectrum. Today, other Christian churches are often studied in Catholic schools both as to their points of commonality with Catholicism and also as to their differences.

More broadly still, Catholics are studying various world religions. The Alberta-wide Senior High School Religious Education Consortium has developed core materials on *Christianity, Basis of Belief* and *Religious Lifestyles* as well as optional materials on *World Religions* and *Ecumenism.*

The traditional Catholic religion is a call to faith, to journey, while respecting individuals and personal freedoms. It is not meant to be an imposition or an indoctrination. This instruction takes place, so to speak, from the inside. The students deepen and broaden their faith life which they have received through their families. They are believers in the truest sense of the word.

This assumption has been severely challenged today because so many students come to Alberta Catholic schools with little or no apparent faith, belief or practice. The school has to evangelize the students, to proclaim the Gospel to them. This is very difficult, since neither the schools nor teachers are well equipped for such a total pastoral responsibility. Schools have been better equipped to continue the students' initiation into the Christian faith, to help them better understand God's word and to practice their faith according to the expectations of the Christian community. In this sense, the school comes to support the faith development role of the family and of the parish.

The explicit presentation of the faith can be done in a number of ways: catechetical, Biblical, historical, doctrinal. No one method is best. It depends on the situation of the school, the students and the

teacher as well as on the program materials available.

In recent years, a religious studies approach has also found its way in Catholic schools, particularly at the secondary level. In this case, the religious phenomenon is studied more from the outside, in the same way as one observes the social, historical or psychological reality. Far more use is made of social sciences methods in this approach. In itself, this approach is not a call to faith, although it does not exclude it. Students are simply asked to study religion as part of the cultural heritage of our society. This religious studies approach seems to be the one endorsed by Alberta's public universites and the Alberta Teachers' Association through its Religious Studies and Moral Education Specialists' Council. More importantly, this religious studies approach can be appropriate for students who are hostile to the idea of religion or who need to take "a more objective view of religion."

Whatever approach is taken, the study of religion is meant to help youth explore the religious world with a view to giving more meaning to life.

Too often, religion was in the past relegated to the classroom. More effort is being made today to communicate that the very way a school is organized and symbolized constitutes a profound religious experience. Students and teachers are very responsive to a decision-making style which is congruent with the Christian teaching on the paramount value of persons. Students, teachers and parents learn much from carefully chosen religious symbols, posters and art work which exemplify the school's religious viewpoint. Students and teachers also learn much from religious celebrations. Students and teachers need to bring the light of the Gospel to some of the competitive practices in schools—whether in sports or in marks—to see if they support the Gospel message of hope. In many such ways, Catholic schools are struggling to become more and more Gospel-centered communities where the Gospel is not only taught but witnessed to by all.

Vital reflection and action on this community building dimension within the school has been stimulated by the Senior High Religious Education Consortium and by the Blueprints Process.

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Religious Education

In place of "catechism," "religious instruction," "religious knowledge," Catholics use the term religious education most often today. Religious education is also intertwined with religious studies, catechetics and Christian religious education.

Often these latter terms are used almost interchangeably with religious education, although they are in fact very different in meaning; they arise out of different histories and backgrounds.

This is well illustrated by the most recent and ambitious religious education project attempted by Alberta's Catholic schools: the Consortium.

Its full title is the Alberta Senior High School Religious Education Consortium. Its two basic handbooks are: *Religious Studies Program* and *Religious Education In The Catholic Community*. In the introduction to the latter, the authors speak of religious education and Christian religious education in the same manner. In their earlier support statement, the Alberta Bishops referred to the "religious studies" portion of the "religious education" program. Realizing these conceptual difficulties and analyses, the authors sought to define their terminology so as to eliminate as much fuzziness as possible. Accordingly, religion is situated within education:

> When it moves us beyond present circumstances towards the realization of the full potential of human existence, education can be said to be religious. Religious education, then, relates the recognizing, encountering, and transforming elements of human activity to the vision of life as gift, and human existence as transcendent.

The authors went further, showing how Christian religious education specifies which tradition and which community incarnates the religious experience in question.

The distinguished work of the Consortium is praiseworthy because it indicates above all how far Catholics have evolved in their understanding of the learning and teaching of religion from the days of the catechism.

Generally, three major traditions are distinguished within religious education today: (1) domestic religious education, (2) Christian religious education, (3) beyond religious education. These three traditions are present within Alberta's Catholic schools in varying manner and intensity from school to school, school system to school system, program to program, from grade to grade.

(1) The words catechesis, religious instruction, community-building and faith development are most often associated with the domestic religious education tradition. Proponents of this tradition say that religious education is at the service of, and on behalf of the church. Religious education is an educational work carried out in the name of, with the approbation of, and under the guidance of the church. Church interests are of prime concern in this approach.

Religious education here is strictly confessional. Its purpose is to awaken, to nourish one's personal belief, to hand on the tradition, to solidify one's religious identity and to build up the ecclesial body. The church tradition has to be conserved and the religious affiliation deepened. Other religions may be respected but not studied as such.

In this catechetical tradition, religious educators initiate, adapt, translate, transmit and maintain the church. The whole community is responsible to socialize the young and the old in the faith, for nurturing, evangelizing and conversion.

The objectives of this catechesis are to effect practicing church membership, transmission of the heritage, handing on the symbols of the faith and deepening of loyalty to one's beliefs, meanings and values.

This religious education tradition reminds us that there is a place for passing on the past. The teacher's role is that of guardian of tradition, of ancient wisdoms and sustainer of religious sensibilities. The teacher is to promote religious literacy.

There is a strong expectation of this tradition in Alberta's Catholic schools today. It is voiced most often by teachers, parents and clergy when they say that the young "must know their religion" or that "with Vatican II, our people do not know what they are all about." This religious education tradition also emphasizes the key role of parents in faith development and that schools are merely the agents of parents in this regard.

With its emphasis on a specific religious community, the past, on rituals, the sacramental, on contemplation, on life-long development, this tradition can give an identity to secular education, resist its overemphasis on knowledge and expand its frame of reference beyond schools. In this orientation, sacrament preparation, for example, is as much the responsibility of the parish and the family as it is of the school.

At the same time, this tradition can be too parochial, too focused on Roman Catholicism, too sectarian. With its emphasis on conventional religious identity and institutional self-identity, this tradition may not be sufficient to provide communication bridges with the larger pluralistic world and other religions. As well, this religious education tradition can neglect the educational process and give too much attention to theology, liturgy, scripture and other sacred disciplines. Such a tradition can also provide a false sense of security in promoting simple acceptance of belief without analysis.

Too much of this religious education tradition in Alberta's Catholic schools leads them to become overly "churchy" and "pietistic." Catholic schools then become too concerned with themselves, and not enough with the world around them. In a sense, such a tradition reinforces a Catholic school's identity as being more "separate," different from the world or as simply preserving the minority immigrant Catholic faith rather than being preoccupied with the larger concern for developing Christian perspectives in the modern world, for promoting social justice.

(2) Educators in the "Christian religious education" tradition are preoccupied with analysis, with transforming the past and with promoting emancipation through education.

Christian religious education involves both religious tradition and contemporary human experience. It is an interdisciplinary approach including the legitimate claims of both theology and education. It is not sufficient merely to advance theological perspectives in the context of the faith. Understanding how a person learns and what factors effect learning are also important. Human experience is integral to faith learning and not incidental.

In this revisionist tradition, educators use both the experience of the Christian community and the current social environment. Christian religious education is thus a critical and progressive aspect of the church's educational ministry.

These religious educators attempt to hold on to two poles in their work: conservation and liberation, continuity and change, tradition and transformation, devotion and inquiry. The secular educational process is central to analysis of the tradition passed on and to the reconstruction of the heritage.

Essentially, Christian religious education reminds practitioners that there is a crucial role for critical reason in religious education. Better put, religious traditions need to be examined in order to stay in grace. This is a hard truth for many Catholics to understand, since critical self-examination has not always received sufficient attention.

This pursuit of understanding is one of the challenges which teachers encounter in Alberta's Catholic schools; within themselves as a body, among the parents, and within the total student body. For there exists a residual attitude that religion "is not to be learned but caught."[3]

While affirming religious affiliation, this tradition does so in a critical fashion. People believe, but not without questioning. This tradition is also profoundly ecumenical, since all Christian data is part of the Christian religious education agenda. This openness also

extends to other religions. It is worth noting that many religious education programs in Alberta today recognize the necessity of incorporating human experience into faith development, of examining religious tradition, and of being open to other Christian churches and to other religions.

(3) Going past the local church community without negating it, the "beyond religious education" tradition seeks the religious dimension to the larger social and public context of education. Ministry is no longer the context; education is. Religion is seen as an integral dimension of good education, of good learning. Religion is identified as a cultural phenomenon.

In such a context, all religions and religious experiences are worthy of reflection, examination and study. Education is both the context and the means of dialogue across all religious lines. Evangelization is contrary to the spirit of this tradition. Educational openness is at the heart of the enterprise, while allowing for the rootedness that is required to critically appreciate one's own tradition.

This religious education tradition teaches one fundamental truth: others, (e.g., persons, cultures, religions) are needed for people to know themselves. Religious education then becomes much more cosmopolitan. A new religious imagination results. This form of religious education purports to increase tolerance and to enhance mutual understanding in a world torn by religious conflicts and global strife. Religion challenges schooling beyond its narrow scope. In turn, education challenges religion to a critical process.

This is the tradition generally advocated by Alberta Education, the Alberta Teachers' Association and public universities. In 1984, Alberta Education insisted that the wider study of religion and religious experience be incorporated in the Senior High Religious Education Consortium materials. The Alberta Teachers' Association's Religious Studies and Moral Education Specialists' Council has continued to advocate a similar "religious studies" approach whereby religion is seen as a fundamental dimension of education and schooling.

Within this framework, no one religion is promoted to the exclusion of others.

Dialogue among adherents of these three broad traditions is a necessity; one could argue that no one of them is better than the other. More realistically for the Alberta Catholic school community, one can assume that these three traditions will continue to co-exist, given the wide variety of community needs, backgrounds, experiences and expectations.

At the same time, in an increasingly interconnected world religious education has to strive to promote both the particular and the universal; a personal ground to stand on as well as to sustain universal values in a pluralistic society where differences are often advocated. In the final analysis, religion will either serve to bring people together to build tolerance or keep them apart. This is the ultimate test for Alberta's Catholic schools.

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Sacrament Preparation

At first sight, sacrament preparation would seem to be rather straightforward and uncontroversial. Catholic schools continue to prepare children for the reception of the sacraments through proper instruction. This is done with due respect for the ages of the children, for the "confession" year, the "first communion" year and the "confirmation" year. And if there are no Catholic schools, the instruction is provided by someone else from the parish or the diocese or the family.

This scenario is based on a number of traditional assumptions. Someone other than the parents has usually been responsible for instruction on the meaning of the sacraments. This someone else has either been the parish, usually the pastor, or the school. Added to this often was the preparation for the actual reception of the sacraments. Frequently the Catholic school was merely the location in which the priest or sister took over the sacraments and other related questions.

Within this "clerical" model of preparation, the sacraments were the purview of the ordained or the "chosen." The ordinary believer was merely the recipient of God's high moments as reenacted in these key rituals. The community, family, and parish were less active witnesses than passive recipients.

Suddenly, this has dramatically changed. This stable scenario has been turned upside down. It is almost as if Jesus were challenging us once again with His parables. In this case, it is a life-parable where the Catholic people are living a new experience of the sacraments in the light of Vatican II.

What has changed? Our whole view of the sacred is different: God does not so much stand outside human experience but lives within it. Sacraments are not so much *sacrare*, "set apart as holy," but

intense community ritual experiences where God, the people of God and individual believers come together. Moreover, sacraments are part of a much wider sacramentality where all life is potentially a sign of God's presence. The community becomes more than a recipient; it is an active witness. Sacraments require the physical presence of people for this divine action to occur.

The role of the ordained is no longer as exclusive as it once was. The presider at the celebration of the sacrament co-ministers by sharing, leading and witnessing with the community. In the preparation phase, the community has a much more active role, particularly through the family. While this is just beginning in Alberta dioceses, it is a clear departure from past practice.

Within this changed perspective, Catholic schools are more and more restricting their role in sacrament preparation to the instruction and meaning dimensions. These are complemented by celebrations in other aspects of the school's life.

While this demarcation appears neat, it is far from it in practice. Besides the usual transition challenges of changed roles, perceptions and beliefs, Catholic practice with respect to the sacraments is in a state of disarray. There is often conflict between school, family and parish on who is admitted to sacraments and how. Sometimes the welfare of the child is forgotten; hope is neglected.

Many Catholic parents never did or no longer participate very actively in Catholic community life, even at Sunday mass. Many children arrive at Catholic schools with little formal religious awareness or regular contact with the institutional church. They are almost completely secular in their outlook. Many are not baptized. Many parents wish their children to have first communion as they did, but are simply not prepared to have an enhanced role in the preparation or in the living witnessing required. Accordingly, responsibility more than ever falls on the school to evangelize as well as to catechize children today. The classroom teacher is at the heart of this difficult situation where the home/school/parish bridging could be so natural and is so necessary. What should be a natural,

intense, community-building experience can become sharply divisive if in fact there is a wide discrepancy in expectations of the parish, school and family participants.

Add to this the increasing number of children from ecumenical marriages and from Catholic families truly involved in the Vatican II renewal. This pluralistic recipe can add up to crisis. The Catholic school is required by law to accept all these students from very diverse faith experiences; admission to Alberta's Catholic schools is determined by law and not by actual faith practice.

As Catholic school people look to the future, they have to hope for continued adult faith education activities within the schools, in the parish and diocese and in the community. A strong sense of faith community is also required within each school to provide a nurturing faith network for teachers and administrators. Anything less than a reaffirmed and deepened vision of Catholic school purposes will not suffice.

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Saints

One of the distinguishing features of many Alberta Catholic schools is their identification with a saint's name. Official saints have a very prominent place in the naming of Catholic schools in Alberta. Moreover, there exists a great diversity of saints' names in Alberta Catholic schools which reflects the strong ethnic diversity in the Catholic community.

At the same time, a certain number of schools are named after leading public figures in the Catholic community. While not officially saints through the canonization procedure, these public figures can be "saints" in the New Testament meaning of people having demonstrated a profound love of God and love of the human family.

In the post-Vatican II era, is the continued use of saints' names appropriate for Catholic schools? In order to answer that query, it is best to review briefly some background on the whole question.

The martyrs were the first saints honored and prayed to in Christian history. The faith community of the first few centuries was confident that those who died for their belief in the living Lord were indeed with Him for eternal life. By the fourth and fifth centuries, men and women who led heroic lives in serving others and confessing (professing) their faith were also honored.

To define or even describe a saint is a difficult if not impossible task because becoming one is a dynamic process between the divine call and the human response. Although the divine and the human, the holy and the whole cannot be seen as identical, they are not to be seen as in opposition to one another.

Perhaps the best image to grasp in undertaking the meaning of sanctity from the human side is that of journey or way. It has its ups and downs, its peaks and valleys. Becoming a saint has its divine side; it

is never a finished journey. The final destination is the "holy." Holy points to the "totally other."

As the Scripture says "We cannot see his face and live" (Exodus 33:20-21). The sacred is beyond humans, but accessible as "a dim reflection in a mirror" (1 Corinthians 13:12) for those who are "baptized in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:3-4). Jesus Christ is the center for any understanding of a saint. All else flows from being grafted into the one human being in whom the fullness of the all-Holy God dwells.

The saints have many characteristics which are paradoxical. They walk comfortably with God, but not necessarily with others—though they evince supreme love for their neighbor (John 13:3-5). They are unusual, even unique, and can be embarrassing to be with because of their intensity of awareness. Some are not very wholesome psychologically, yet they have a strong sense of personal identity. Often they are so engrossed in a cause that they forget other matters. They can surrender their deepest selves to God, and be very determined in accomplishing the divine will. The paradox of the sacred and the secular perdures.

An issue that requires review is how believers "pray to the saints." The type of prayer to be excluded is the idea of taming or controlling "the gods." In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, prayer is a communion with God who alone is source of all life, hope, love and holiness.

From the first centuries, Christians expressed a special union with those martyred for their belief in the one God. Prayer bonded those still here with those who had gone before as a source of hope for the future. The tradition of the "communion of saints" comes, in part, from this practice.

Present-day models for praying to the saints include the idea of communion with those who have gone before us and of intercession in union with Christ. The Eucharistic prayers from the mass use such expressions as:

> You have gathered us here around the table of your Son, in fellowship with the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, and all the saints.

Help us work together for the coming of your Kingdom, until at last we stand in your presence to share the life of the saints.

May we praise you in union with saints who have done your will throughout the ages.

In an age of renewal and transition like our own, it is appropriate to take time to celebrate. A well prepared celebration, like a good party, nurtures a sense of identity and Christian family roots. A sense of pride in the family, a feeling of continuity with the past and a hope for the future are fostered when Christians consider the life of individuals whom they hold in esteem.

The present era is one that hungers for heroes. In an age of cynicism, where contemporary popular figures may project an image of greed and excessive individualism, it is appropriate to look at people who have heard the gentle or natural call of God in their lives. Saints differ from heroes in that they see their call to greatness as a gracious gift. Their ambition is for the "higher things" and, as St. Paul tells us, the highest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The saints put us in touch with the community in need and with the whole body of the church. They help us remember that there is a communion of saints, a web of life that goes beyond death.

Saints reveal to us the uniqueness of their encounter with the holy, with the very edge of life as, for example, did Mary, the woman who best lived out a life according to God's will.

Thus, a school's celebration of its name day enhances Catholic identity for parents, students, and staff.

To return to the original question, it is obvious that the use of saints to name Catholic schools is most appropriate. Not only do saints evoke a deeper calling to respond to God's love in Christians' daily lives, but they remind that there is "more than meets the eye." A renewed understanding of sainthood today also pays far more attention to the saints' fundamental life choices as followers of Christ, and not so much to their idiosyncracies.

A serious attempt by schools to be more intentional about their patron saints should lead to a concerted, obvious and repeated pattern of emulation by prayer, action and reflection. In this sense, a Catholic school will always be working to identify with, and build up the people of God, the community of believers wherever it is located. In this working for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:26), the theme of service or ministry will prevail. A Catholic school is meant for students, teachers and parents to serve each other. In the process, they will serve God.

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Secular

Christians are known to use a specific language to identify their own unique religious story. At times, they use words to indicate what they are not by comparing themselves to others. In the process, however, the comparison may harden a distinction into an absolute dichotomy—an unfortunate distortion.

Secular, or the "world" in its etymological sense, is one such comparative word. In the Catholic school milieu, these kinds of expressions are often heard: "in secular circles," "secular teachers," "secular humanism." As a matter of fact, the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association Mission Statement uses this terminology: "secular educational formation" and "secular learning."

These expressions were used long before Vatican II. Since the church of the time saw itself as up against the world, "not belonging to the world" as Jesus put it (cf. John 15:19; 17:16), secular took on a very oppositionist meaning. With the evolving notion of church emerging after Vatican II as yeast to leaven the world, a different understanding of secular evolved. As Jesus put it: "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent you into the world" (John 17:18). The world and the religious have an inseparable relationship since there is no religious or sacred without the world. The 1977 Vatican statement on *The Catholic School* reflected this new consciousness when it stated that the church's "destiny is to serve humanity until it reaches fullness in Christ" (No. 7) and to proclaim the faith and to reveal "to all ages the transcendent goal which gives life its full meaning" (No. 8). Accordingly, the Catholic school's "task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith and the synthesis of faith and life" (No. 37). Concretely, this means that all human knowledge taught is integrated through the promotion of Christian virtues such as love and hope.

It remains that as one listens carefully to the use of the word secular, various shades of meaning become evident. These shades of meaning point to different constellations of words and, as well, to different applications in the school's life.

Secular can mean, first of all, the simple decline of religion. Thus the influence of the Catholic Church in Quebec schools and in many Alberta Catholic schools is now much less pervasive. To some, the Catholic schools have become secular. The explicit presence of the Catholic faith in symbols (e.g., crucifixes, statues), in religious authorities (e.g., sisters and priests), in religious practice (e.g., sacraments and pious devotions), has largely disappeared, to be replaced by new symbols, lay personnel, school-run religious celebrations. The crucial questions become whether the previous religious symbols and practices of the Catholic school have been replaced and transformed into something equal or better. For example, where the March spring break has replaced the Easter break, has the preparation for this holy season been hindered or enhanced? Secular in this sense can simply mean religion adapting to the realities of a pluralistic world which is overtly non-believing. In a sense, then, religion today is worldly almost in reaction to the excesses of the past.

Secular can also mean a mere conformity to the world. The world is encapsulated. Whatever the morals, the values, the beliefs, the practices and the symbols of the world, that is what religion will adopt. Secularism results: it becomes the new religion. Baptism becomes a mere cultural and social phenomenon. In a very real sense, different from the first meaning, secular replaces the religious internally. Many Catholic school partners wonder today if in fact the Catholic school, having gained popular and legal acceptance, no longer in opposition to the Protestants and no longer required to maintain the ethnic culture in an urban setting, has simply adapted the public school model with a veneer of religion. Thus are found policies and practices in Catholic schools with no reference whatsoever to the Gospel or to the Catholic tradition. Often such policies and practices are administered by leaders with no apparent effort to be religiously centered. This is the practical, secular style of many Catholic schools.

It reflects very much the popular, secularized, contemporary, educational jargon.

At the same time, there are many other instances where such practical secularism is being challenged and changed: teacher selection, principals' leadership, evaluation of student learning and teacher performance, school planning, school building identity and student discipline. The basic question in these cases is whether Catholic school partners are actively attempting to "baptize" or to adapt schooling practices which conform explicitly to the Gospel.

Secular takes on a third meaning: secularization, demystification or desacralization of the world, of religion being identified with the world or indeed of controlling it. In this case, secular denotes a freeing impulse of contemporary Catholicism from some of the oppressive practices and beliefs of the world. Religious faith today then comes to be free religion in contrast to being the "opium of the people" as Karl Marx described it. The over-reliance on religion in the past may have led basic learning practices to be neglected in Catholic schools. Indeed, the over-reliance on a quantified, prescriptive and "works"-oriented religion has led to a rebirth today. The fundamental question now is: How can the religious impulse and imagination serve to effectively unite all learning in a Catholic school so that a more all-encompassing, tolerant approach is assured? Religion in this case serves the legitimate ends of all human knowledge. Religion has a social dimension which includes the domain of schooling.

Secular can also describe those who just do not believe, as opposed to those who do. Non-believers are looked at from the believers' world view. In a sense, Christians look askance at non-believers in the same way the Romans perceived the Christians as atheistic, as not performing the Roman rituals and not believing in the Roman gods. In this context, Catholic schools have to be more concerned about how faithful they are to their ideals than how secular the others are. Self-righteousness has to be avoided. Tolerance has to be promoted.

In the final sense, secular can mean the transposition of beliefs and patterns of behavior from the religious sphere to the world. Profane as a synonym would relate to this meaning; irreverence would also. While this meaning relates very closely to the second definition, the emphasis here is on the notion that the religious is co-opted by the secular, often retaining the language of faith but giving up the life-source. One very recent example: some public schools in Alberta have adopted the religious expression "pastoral care." By this they simply mean the attention given to "the hidden curriculum," the human relations climate of the school, or to "humanizing" the school. In its original sense, pastoral care means caring for the religious needs of teachers, students and parents in schools or parishes by a religious professional or volunteer, usually a sister, priest or qualified layperson.

Catholic schools can end up advancing the negative aspects of secularization unconsciously by behaving as if God does not exist or as if Jesus died in vain (cf. 1 Corinthians 15). In a world devoid of hope and tinkering with nuclear destruction, Catholic schools must not only uphold religious beliefs but practice them so that the hope taught will be from God. The Catholic school which cannot transcend the ordinary has barely begun its mission.

The phenomenon of the secular is one which very much crosses over church lines. In a very real sense, we all live in a blatantly secular world. The sharing of secular experiences can bring Christians together to understand better their common roots, their current practices, to identify with each other and to be more in tune with contemporary religious living.

While the secular-sacred paradigm is still often used among Catholics, it is slowly being replaced. The dichotomizing of sacred and secular establishes far too rigid a separation between faith and other aspects of life. As well, it isolates Christianity from the normal course of living. One might add too that the worldliness of contemporary experiences tends to erase the traditional distinction between the sacred and the secular. Religion is more diffused throughout the culture. Moreover, from within that very secular-sacred paradigm

come the seeds of its own destruction, whereby the truly religious impulses are set free, liberated from the external trappings of a religious viewpoint that does not accept the world. In this sense, religious change is taking place rather than religious experience becoming secular.

Karl Rahner best stated this new emerging "God in our midst" paradigm when he said that "the challenge today was not to pour religion into people but to help them discover Christ in their midst." Thus, there is much work today on the enduring myths in western culture which are "signals of transcendence." And so religion is not so much disappearing before the phenomenon of the secular; it is merely relocating.

It takes new eyes and new ears to perceive and to hear the religious in the midst of the secular. Catholic schools are called to help in this immense task of education to a new understanding of how and where God is acting in these times.

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Social Justice

Social justice is basic respect and tolerance for human beings, and specific actions regarding human rights. Pope John Paul II was an untiring advocate for human rights on his 1984 Canadian tour. This ancient teaching, reiterated by the Catholic Church today, is based on a simple premise: there exists no society, no institution without the person at the heart of it. While "no man is an island," to quote John Donne, the community must always be ministering to the individual person.

It is strange to admit that social justice has become a new term in Catholic consciousness over the last 20 years. It was previously not seen as a basic and integral part of the Christian message. Most Catholics perceived "charity" or "love of neighbor" as their basic religious responsibility and this was understood only in "desirable" terms of helping the poor, of giving them care and material help.

It is true that the Catholic Church has elaborated its specific social teachings only in the last century beginning with Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891. Among the most famous recent social justice encyclicals are: John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra* in 1961, Pope Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* in 1967 and John Paul II's On Human Work in 1982. This social teaching insists that the love for justice in the world lies at the heart of the Christian life. It is an integral element of the heart of the Christian life. It is an integral element of the Gospel. Social justice is not a luxury; it is a necessity. While technological progress and scientific advancements have great potential for good, they also cause great harm. Social justice seeks to make the world aware how humanity can best be served by its creations.

If there is one area where the Catholic Church has shown a new prophetic leadership in both Canada and the United States, it is in the area of social statements, of social action, of social justice, of social ethics. This is simply a logical outgrowth of the Vatican II position on how the church views the world. A church which says that it is concerned about all people must then do as Jesus did: it must pay a great deal of attention to the least fortunate in society. Over the last 10 years, bold statements have been made by the United States and Canadian Catholic Bishops' Conferences. The 1984 United States Bishops' statement on nuclear disarmament caused a furor. The January 3, 1983 Canadian Bishops' statement on *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis* has done the same in this country. Never has the Catholic Church been so relevant in Canada; it has become so by challenging the social order here and abroad. The Canadian Bishops' stress on work being for persons is the same as found in Pope John Paul II's 1981 social encyclical On Human Work.

The Catholic school must reflect the new church consciousness in the area of social justice. This means reviewing instances of perceived injustice in its own ranks. Whether this deals with teacher/student performance, teacher hiring practices, employee working conditions, fair wages, minority group rights, language access, parent and student decision-making, does not matter. The school should educate justly as well as educate *for* justice. Catholic schools are asked today to work towards a transformation of social structures on the question of justice. This involves both a personal and a social conversion. Catholic schools cannot really carry out their socializing role unless they participate in a social project for greater social justice. Solidarity is a key word in this process, a solidarity emanating both from the needs of the secular world today and from the Gospel call to share.

Social justice, for Catholic schools, also means working against the community fragmentation which affects our times. Because God is a Father and because believers are His sons and daughters, Catholic schools are called to serve and not to dominate their fellow humans. God is not a power so much as a Father. His love in Jesus calls us to

build human communities which genuinely incarnate the principle of service. This spirit of service should be pervasive within the school and among schools. But this service call of the school is only real if it extends out to an even larger circle of families and into society. The school has a serious community-building function today.

Another manifestation of the justice theme in the Catholic school is "peace and development" education associated with Lent. If ever there was an extraordinary change within the lifetime of contemporary Catholic educators, this is one. From the old, narcissist type of Lenten practices to the new outward orientation, there is a world of difference. The whole notion of prayer, alms and fasting now has taken on a social orientation. The Catholic schools are also called today to work for the dignity and the equality of all persons. Since all are brothers and sisters in Christ with a common Father, all share the right in principle to life, to tolerance, to respect, to security and to love. Whether one cites the abuse of human rights in terms of political systems or abortion, or divorce, or male/female sexism, child abuse, perverted consumerism, battered wives, crime, violence, human beings are not being respected. Catholic schools are asked today to work for the absolute value of the human person, to ground this value in the transcendental God, in the moving love of His son, Jesus Christ. There are many ways to actualize such a vision. It is up to the Catholic school to explore as many of them as possible, starting with itself.

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Tolerance

Tolerance emerged on the Alberta school landscape in the 1980s. It became prominent when over some years a public school teacher repeated highly intolerant views and teachings regarding the Jewish people. This affair gained national attention through the news media and forced all parts of the Alberta education community to review their policies and practices with respect to tolerance. The government even set up a special task force on tolerance and understanding.

This strange process has led to a catharsis of public cleansing. It is almost as if all parties wished to demonstrate how tolerant they were and how intolerant others seem. There is no doubt that this event has led many Albertans to review the good and bad of our contemporary educational practice.

It is a fair question to ask the public school system, the universities, the Alberta School Trustees' Association and the Alberta Teachers' Association: have they tolerated Catholic schools? If so, is it because of the latter's contribution to Alberta society or simply because they were obliged by their legal status? In turn, did Catholic schools perceive the public education network as a force for good or evil?

This whole tolerance affair has posed fundamental questions to Catholic educators. Can a publicly funded, religiously oriented school system educate students to tolerance?

Tolerance is a many-sided word. In its most pejorative meaning, tolerance is associated with toleration: "putting up with" differences in other individuals (e.g., actions, beliefs) of which one does not approve, often because of indifference or a desire to avoid conflict. In this sense, tolerance has strong negative connotations and is not a very healthy attitude in a society.

In its positive meaning, tolerance means putting up with others and their differences (e.g., opinions and ways) because their uniqueness is seen as an enrichment to society and thus to all individuals. True tolerance encourages respect and acceptance for differences between people. With this approach, tolerance is a sign of strength, for it is only the strong who support those who differ from them. One is tolerant even when the right exists to intervene or to suppress. This takes intelligence, strength and sympathy.

Tolerance does not mean lowering standards, nor giving everything equal value, nor blurring the differences between good and evil. The spirit of tolerance should lead a person to refrain from judging, to hope, to recognize the shortcomings of one's viewpoints with the need to welcome sympathetically the enrichment of different viewpoints.

The contrary to tolerance is: intolerance, dogmatism and fanaticism. Tolerance has limits. To attempt to accept totally viewpoints different from one's own may mean trying to accept the intolerable, to become untrue, unfaithful to oneself, to one's original positions.

The practice of tolerance is applicable to both the majority and the minority in a community, for both can be guilty of intolerance.

Jesus offers a very revealing teaching on this question of tolerance. In the parable of the good seed and the thistle (Matthew 13:24-32), Jesus maintains the distinction between evil and good. He emphasizes the good and the difficulty in disentangling the good seed from the thistle. He also expresses confidence, and hope in the final triumph of good over evil, for which none can judge in this lifetime.

In the Christian tradition, it can been seen that tolerance means understanding and accepting others in all of their differences (e.g., actions and beliefs). This does not mean necessarily agreeing with them, but at least having a great desire to recognize them. All men and women are created equal and in the image of God. Jesus pushed this further with His loving sacrifice for all humankind. The challenge of any Christian institution is to incorporate this spirit of equality, respect, justice and understanding.

With respect to Catholic schools' practice of tolerance, let us examine three examples:

- The first relates to the very existence of Catholic schools. Are Catholic schools intolerant of public schools and of other minority groups who would desire similar publicly funded privileges? Are Catholic school graduates less tolerant citizens because they attended religious schools? This writer has seen no evidence of the latter. Unfortunately, there may be some evidence of the former. Are Catholics so smug in their constitutional right to exist as a religious minority in English Canada that they may forget to support other religious minorities in their pursuit of cultural and religious diversity with schooling in our society? This is not to say that Catholics should give up their well-earned constitutional rights to schools. On the contrary, from the security of their uniqueness and strength they should be tolerant and supportive of other minority groups. This means avoiding sectarian smugness.
- Flowing from this first example is the question of the Catholic schools' tolerance towards hiring employees of other Christian churches or believers in other religions. This is much debated among Catholic school partners. Essentially, three points need to be made:
  1. Catholic schools have a right to hire Catholic teachers who can and will promote the religious goals of the school system;
  2. Catholic schools need to hire the most competent people for teaching positions so that the best schooling possible is offered;
  3. Catholic schools need to be tolerant enough to hire other Christian teachers if they are the best people available for teaching positions, providing these teachers are willing to support the employer's religious goals. They too can share in the teaching ministry.
- A third area of investigation for Catholic schools is that of acceptance of students from religious viewpoints other than the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic schools generally have been very

receptive to other students. At times this has been for financial advantage or because of legal responsibilities (e.g., only school in the area). But not often enough have Catholic schools presented a religiously tolerant, ecumenical attitude: accepting students out of respect for their religious viewpoints and because the Catholic school would be enriched by such students. This less than tolerant attitude is particularly aggravating to the community when space is available in Catholic schools.

As the 1980s continue, Catholic schools will have to evolve ever more tolerant attitudes towards others in our pluralistic society. Only thus will they reflect Catholic beliefs and also be enabled to work cooperatively in a democratic society.

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Values

Values is a contemporary buzzword in the world of schooling. It is used in administration, in trustee discussions, in parent evenings, in teacher professional development, in religious education circles, in student discussions. It has become trite.

It was not always so. People used to refer to principles, to morals, to standards, to beliefs as being the core of society, of education, of family, of schooling. There seems never to have been a time when schools as they are known today would not promote moral principles, sustain standards, preserve certain fundamental beliefs about human beings by the processes of teaching and learning. The debates have been more about how such standards, beliefs, principles and morals were to be preserved.

Perhaps the word values has become popular in education because it connotes so much more feeling and personal impact than principles and standards. Values is a warmer word.

The word usually encompasses what makes a person want to live, what ultimately counts, to the point of staking one's life on values, of suffering for them, of putting up with considerable opposition and derision. Values are lived; from them people gain life and nurture. Values are therefore very significant and by definition do not relate to insignificant matters. Values are not related either to superficial choices, or to passing feelings. Values endure by their very nature. People are usually ready to defend publicly the values they believe in and live by. Values ordinarily become part of a person's lifestyle. Values are just not an intellectual and theoretical construct; they demand that people act according to the conviction, to the faith which they assume. Values are deeply related to each other as constellations. Thus a Christian value system has such a cluster of key values.

Values have an affective component. They are linked to a person's desire and will. In that sense, values are not things; they are part of a person. Values express a person's preferences and judgments. The common expression "value judgment" indicates this dimension of values. Value judgments indicate that a person stresses this over that, believes in this more than that.

Values, therefore, have a subjective aspect. People choose them. They do not exist estranged from a person. They exist and are made meaningful only by and for a person. In some cases, values are personal. In other cases, values relate to a group, to a community. In these cases personal values should not contradict the community since they need each other; they are built on each other.

Values also have an objective aspect; they are authoritative for people. Part of living is to discover and to integrate values established, formulated and experienced by others. This is particularly true in the moral values domain. An individual does not create them; they are there for one to discover. They invite; their "fruitfulness" is overpowering.

Values exist as a hierarchy. Some mediating values like respect lead to end values like love. Values are situated in a view of the world, of the human person. They are open to each other and are linked to each other to constitute a network. All values are situated in a scheme of things, in a certain order. The daily events of life, however, lead to conflicting values since the order may not be evident or may be in transition. They may need to be established, or need to be rediscovered. Socially as well, value conflicts occur. The recent debates about tolerance and understanding in Alberta are a very clear case in point. Reconciliation among values is often necessary.

Values tend to be encapsulated in seminal words like beauty, truth, the good, sense of person, freedom. Values are never ultimately defined and their meanings are elaborated with effort towards clarity and concreteness. To name values means to attempt this difficult and important developmental task.

This is the profound meaning attributed to the "naming" process in the Scriptures. To name someone or something is to give them life in the eyes of God. This is a fundamental purpose of education, to name reality and experiences so that the teachers' and the students' lives are affected and challenged.

With this in mind, it is easier to understand that schooling is in fact all about values. All schools—private, public and religious—deal with values, be they subjective or objective. The choice becomes what values shall be taught by the formal curriculum of the school, the way the school is organized and by the way people relate to each other. At the very least, one could argue, certain "universal" values should be taught and lived: solidarity, justice, honesty, respect for others, freedom, truth.

It can be expected that more value choices will be involved in the schools of the future as society continues to become more complex. Schools will become even more important in their conserving and liberating roles of helping students choose their values and live by them.

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Vatican II

Even the casual reader of Catholic school literature of the last 20 years will notice how frequently Vatican II is quoted. Not only is it cited as a documentary source regarding important Roman Catholic position statements in the mid-20th century, but also as a crucial experiential event which charted a whole new set of attitudes for Roman Catholics. Vatican II is seen by all as one of the most important world religious events of this century.

To understand it, it is important to remember that it is only one of many official church assemblies held since Christ died. These were usually held to deal with special issues or crises in the life of the church. Vatican II was a very different council, however: it had representatives from around the world; and it was an ecumenical or general church council. Vatican II was the 21st such council, the previous one being Vatican I in 1869-70. From 1962 to 1965, 2,000 church leaders participated in Vatican II. It was called by John XXIII to renew and to modernize the church. It was John XXIII's view that, while conserving the essentials, dialogue, brotherhood, and openness were to become the new bywords in the Catholic Church.

Vatican II helped shape a new identity for Catholics, one that was more universal and less imperialistic. This "coming of age" for Catholics has been a slow process, since ecumenical councils had not been part of the contemporary Catholic consciousness.

The Council produced 16 major documents on church renewal dealing with the church itself, the church's liturgy, divine revelation, the ecumenical movement, Christian education, religious freedom, the missions and roles of clergy, religious and laity and the church in the modern world.

With the hindsight of 20 years, it is easier to understand its achievements and shortcomings. In fact, as is so often the case, the latter result from the former.

The following are some of the principal achievements of Vatican II:

1. The church "opened up her windows," to quote John XXIII. The unquestioning, unchanging and fixed structure of the church's organization and theory—in place for centuries—was certainly changed. Catholics have generally approved these changes.
2. The principle of collegiality was introduced into the very decision-making style of the Council's working sessions. The management model emanating from Vatican II emphasized co-responsibility in the church, not only between the Pope and the bishops but equally among all communities and groups. Coupled with the rediscovery of the lay people, this achievement is very significant. While this type of decision-making has still to reach its full promise, much has happened to emphasize collegiality, particularly with parish and diocesan councils and national conferences of bishops.
3. Catholicism has officially moved from a defensive stance towards other Christians and the world generally to one of dialogue, positive respect and tolerance. Science, technology, politics and humanism are no longer things to warn the faithful against.
4. Catholics are invited to be deeply immersed in their world as a source of great opportunity and hope, and not as a place that taints. Their difference is not based simply on separating, on being the majority or minority.
5. Catholics are learning a new style of worshipping together which is deeply immersed in scripture, use of the vernacular, participation by the congregation and creative use of the arts, especially music.

On the other hand, some of the shortcomings of Vatican II have become more glaring with time.

1. The fundamental changes in the liturgical life of the church were not well implemented. They did not attend to the basic context

in which the liturgical changes would take place: the parish. The structure of the local worshipping community as well as the religious lives of the people were not given enough attention. Essentially, the geographical parish remained as it was before Vatican II.

2. The church's sociological and economic analysis of the world tended to be oversimplified. The world's population problem, for example, was not really addressed. The relationship of sacred to secular was also oversimplified. It is hard to accept today Vatican II's assumptions of a one-directional, positive future. Humanity has struggled with many wars, famines, and oppressions in the last 20 years.
3. Vatican II did not attempt to develop a new style for educating people in the new church. As a result, much confusion has occurred and is still occurring about "what I should believe" and "how I should live." Thus there exist today persistent religious practices and values that do not reflect the new church, and the resurgence of religious practices that are pre-Vatican II. The Council did not give as much attention to the experiences of the faithful as it did to doctrinal propositions.

There are many areas in which the Catholic school is trying to incorporate the insights of Vatican II.

First, there are few members of religious orders in schools today. The religious leadership role must now come from the lay teachers. A totally different outlook and style is involved in such a radical change. As a result, one could argue that Catholic schools are more secular than ever, as if their religious identity is enhanced solely by the presence of "official" religious.

Second, it is apparent that the post-Vatican II Catholic school has to place enormous emphasis on continual updating and professional development of its teachers' theological competence. With the emphasis on the entire "people of God" all teachers are called to ministry. A paradox Catholic teachers face is that of maintaining a funda-

mental independence from the official church while working closely with church and parish people.

Third, Catholic school educators are having to deal far more effectively with the real pluralism within Catholic beliefs and practices. Teachers deal with many different Catholic homes, parents and parishes today. Indeed, teachers themselves come from diverse backgrounds. How can unity be sustained in such diversity?

Fourth, religious education programs have to reflect all these changes. This means that they have to be revised frequently to better reflect the needs of students and parents, as well as to reflect the faith life of the community. Long gone is the catechism that only had to be memorized and certainly never changed.

Vatican II led to enormous change in Catholic schools; nor will it cease. As the dynamic post-Vatican II Catholic Church continues to adapt, the schools must go on providing sound faith leadership and helping students deal effectively with the moral challenges of our time.

Catholic school partners will face for years the issues of ecumenism and peace and justice education. With respect to ecumenism, the post-Vatican II Catholic Church no longer regards itself as the only true church, the only source of salvation. It now recognizes manifestations of God's truth in other Christian churches. As well, the Catholic Church recognizes that all Christians are challenged to work together to witness to Christ's love in the world through so-called "secular ecumenism" activities. From this theological perspective, it would seem that Catholic schools have to be far more positive towards other Christians, students, teachers, parents. How would this affect Catholic schools? It certainly seems they are being called to go beyond protecting their acquired rights, to supporting other Christians who also wish religiously oriented, publicly supported schooling for their children. Coalitions are occurring among Christians to support just social causes. At the same time, Catholic schools are called to identify regressive religious schooling.

If Catholics are not to be isolated from the world but rather to contribute to its development, then positive, constructive programs of social justice, peace education and action must be developed. The Catholic school cannot divorce itself from such burning issues, but must work actively for a better world.

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Appendix

Mission Statement

1. Jesus Christ came to reveal the true identity of humanity as a people saved from its sin of rejecting God—a people who can discover its full identity only by responding to God's voice. Any authentic concern for humanity then is profoundly religious, just as any authentic concern for religion is profoundly humanistic.
2. The work of the Christian Church is to help humanity discover its proper identity as called to God in Christ by the Spirit—a call demanding either rejection or acceptance.
3. Catholic schools exist as that dimension of the church concerned with directing secular educational formation towards an encounter with this world of the sacred. This means providing an education that prepares the way of the Lord, that opens up secular learning to its relationship with God's saving call in Christ and in Christian history.
4. Catholic schools, then, help children learn about themselves and their world in relation to God—a relation embodied in the life and message of Christ Jesus and in the community bearing the name Christian. It follows that Catholic schools complement the formation which is ideally provided in Catholic homes and parishes: for inasmuch as it is the school that structures and teaches the wealth of human knowledge and practice, so it is the Catholic school that can best teach children to reflect on and celebrate the religious meaning of that knowledge and practice.
5. Accordingly, the Catholic school is needed, not just to provide classes specifically in religion and Christianity, but more importantly to set forth the world of the sciences and humanities in its relation to religion and Christianity.
6. Catholic schools cannot produce religious convictions or

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religious conversion, as this is a gift of love from God alone. But Catholic schools can and must provide a climate conducive to religious transformation, by encouraging children to express their religious convictions openly in a manner that unites thinking and feeling.

7. To accomplish this, teachers in Catholic schools know and live the religious dimension of the secular world, if they are to communicate that dimension in the classroom. This does not mean, however, that the religious practice of teachers must be in all cases the governing norm of employment in Catholic schools. It is of even greater importance that the Catholic school nourish and promote authentic Christian living in its teachers. In turn, teachers are aware their educational ministry already gives them an active role in Catholic parish life.
8. To meet the purpose of Catholic education in our own day, there is need of including the religious and Christian dimensions of humanity in teacher-training programs at universities and colleges, just as there is need of continuing religious education for teachers already in the schools.
9. Catholic education should be highly diversified, sensitive to the changing needs of various racial, ethnic, and economic groups. Every effort should be made to introduce community and neighborhood programs that embody the specifically Catholic dimension of childhood and adult education. The heritage and purpose of Catholic schools in Alberta should itself become a topic for discussion in school programs.
10. Catholic school administrators exercise a responsibility not only in relation to government policy-makers and to the Bishops of Alberta, but also in relation to Catholic parents and children. As educational leaders, administrators have the task of coordinating the many diverse tasks demanded by education, and of building community by infusing those tasks with a unifying Christian and Catholic vision.